

Intersection by agnikai58

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Summary:

The Mind Flayer has been sealed away but it's not the only one of its kind. There are others and their goal is to learn about humanity. Joyce Byers is far from the right person for the job, but she agrees to teach them as best as she can. In the process she begins to learn about them and eventually herself.

Rated E for explicit content. Joyce Byers/Tentacles, OC Mind Flayers, consensual tentacle sex.

1. Chapter 1

“Jonathan! Will! Get up, you're going to be late for school!” Joyce's voice carried down the hallway as she yelled at her absentee sons from in front of the stove. While she waited Joyce continued shoveling the pile of eggs around in one pan and flipping strips of bacon in another. After a minute she switched the pans to the cool burners and turned the dials to shut the oven off. Joyce turned towards the dining room with its still empty table before shaking her head. “Jonathan! Will!”

It had been a month since the Snow Ball and things had gotten back to normal. Almost. Their attempt to cure Will's 'infection' had been successful and the Mind Flayer's control was gone, but the memories remained. Not the monster's memories, Will's memories. Even when the creature had been in control of his body, Will had been lurking in the background. Watching, listening and seeing everything the Mind Flayer was doing. The soldiers who had died in the tunnels, the people who had been massacred in the hospital... those memories couldn't be dispelled by electric heaters and the searing touch of hot metal.

With the closure of Hawkins Lab her best resource for helping Will cope with his trauma was gone. Sam Owens hadn't been perfect, he had dismissed Will's experiences with the Mind Flayer as being PTSD, but an imperfect counselor was better than none at all. With his departure from Hawkins, there was nowhere else for Joyce to take Will. Even if she had tried the counselors in town, nobody would believe them when they tried to explain what had happened. 'Hi, my son was abducted to an alternate dimension by a faceless monster for a week and a year later he was infected with a virus by a telepathic alien from the same dimension.' The one thing that she *could* do was try to bring some normalcy back to their lives.

“Jonathan! Will! Get up already!” Joyce wiped her hands on a towel before heading down the hallway towards her oldest son's room. Will being slow to get out of bed wasn't unusual but not her eldest. Ever since Lonnie had run out on them Jonathan had been the responsible one. She stopped in front of his door and tapped her knuckles on the door. “Stop messing around Jonathan. I need to leave for work in fifteen minutes.”

There was no response. No 'just a minute' or 'hang on a second mom', just silence. Joyce turned her head to the side and leaned in just a tad to listen. She couldn't hear an alarm clock or the sound of her son moving around either, just silence. Joyce knocked harder this time as she spoke again, a touch of unease beginning to wriggle around in the pit of her stomach. “Jonathan? Sweetie? Are you all right?”

More silence.

She turned the door knob and pushed the door open a crack so she could peek inside. “Jonathan?” Once again there wasn't response, just a dead silence. Joyce pushed the door open and stepped inside, her gaze sweeping the room. Nothing looked out of the ordinary at first glance. That Evil Dead poster hung on the wall above his record player, his bed was made and everything else in the room looked like it had just been cleaned up. The only thing missing was her son.

Joyce's brow furrowed as she looked around the room again. The room was *too* perfect as a matter of fact. Jonathan was the more responsible of her sons but he was still a teenager and this room looked like it hadn't been lived in at all. The bed was the very definition of hospital corners, the laundry bin was empty, and so was the trash can. The only thing missing was a layer of dust. Joyce slowly backed up into the hallway before hurrying over to Will's room. This time she didn't bother knocking and barged inside straight away. It was the same thing all over again. This bedroom was as spotless as his older brother's and just like before there was no sign of

the room's owner. She backed up and turned towards the front of her house. Her first steps were slow and halting, but by the time she made it out the front door and onto the porch Joyce was practically sprinting. Her voice rang out over the yard as she yelled in a wavering voice. "Will!"

Joyce slowed to a halt near her car and the hairs on her arms to stand up beneath her sleeves as the abnormality outside her house began to sink in. The sky overhead was covered in a uniformly gray layer of clouds and the sun was hidden somewhere behind them though she couldn't tell where. Nothing about her home and the trees nearest it appeared out of the ordinary but the trees beyond those grew blurrier until the ones a hundred feet away seemed as if she was looking at them from a far greater distance. It was the middle of January yet there wasn't any frost on the grass and the air felt almost temperate instead of being below the freezing point. Lastly a deathly silence hung over the area except for echoes of her voice that lasted far longer than they should have.

As she looked around the front yard a stray wind brushed past her from behind, the force of it enough to make her clothes and hair flutter. Blades of grass flattened to the ground, the wind turned, and began to spin in a circle perhaps six feet in diameter. That feeling of unease from earlier returned twice as strong and Joyce took a step backwards, one hand hovering uncertainly in front of her chest. The air above that patch of grass began to darken until a ball of dull silver smoke was floating there in front of her. Tendrils began protruding outwards as the sphere took shape. Four limbs that ended with a trio of claw-like digits, a tail and a long angular head that tapered to points on both ends.

She had seen this particular shape before, once in the Halloween video her son had recorded and once in the picture he had drawn. But this wasn't an outline on her television screen or wax on paper. This thing was here, with her.

“No!” Tears began welling up in the corners of her eyes and a sob escaped her as she stared at the Mind Flayer.

Her sons were missing, this monster was here in the real world, and she was unarmed. The rifle was back in the house and she didn't have anything in her pockets except for a pair of keys. Keys to her car. Joyce pulled them out and yanked her front door open. She stuck them in the ignition and twisted them. The car rumbled and she stared out the window at the approaching creature. “This is for Will you son of a bitch!”

Joyce's foot stamped down on the accelerator and she turned the wheel so her car was aimed straight for the alien creature. Her tires spun in the dirt, then the car lurched forward as it gained traction and took off. Joyce's fingers tightened on the wheel and she tensed up as the moment of impact approached. Just before she would have hit it the creature dispersed into a cloud that she was passing through and into the forest behind it. A tree older than her house drew closer and closer to the front of her vehicle.

Joyce sat upright, her chest heaving as adrenaline coursed through her veins. She looked around, confused before her environment dawned on her. She was sitting on her bed, a thick blanket covering her legs. Joyce was in her room, lit only by a full moon shining through her window. She wasn't in her car, there wasn't a Mind Flayer outside and she hadn't tried just to run it over.

“What the hell was that?” She asked the empty room.

2. Chapter 2

“So what did you need to talk about Joyce?”

The sheriff of Hawkins, Jim Hopper, sat his hat down on the dining room table as he took a seat opposite the home's owner. Joyce wrung her hands for a second before firmly setting them down in her lap. “I... I had some kind of vision.”

Jim froze for a moment, the admission catching by surprise, before he responded. “A vision? What, like the ones Will was having? How is that even possible? We closed the Gate.”

“I don't know, Jim. It happened last night while I was sleeping, a dream I guess. I was making breakfast for the boys, but they weren't getting up. When I went to go find them, they were gone. I went outside, but they weren't there either and then I saw...”

“Saw what?” Hopper asked as he leaned forward in his chair.

Joyce shivered involuntarily as she remembered the way the monster from her dream had appeared, seemingly from thin air. “That thing... what did the boys call it? The Mind Flayer.”

Jim rubbed at his chin as he looked out the window for a moment. “Are you sure it wasn't just a dream? We closed the Gate two months ago and nothing has happened since then.”

“What? Are you saying that you don't believe me?” demanded Joyce, her voice beginning to rise in volume, as she stood from her chair and paced towards the kitchen before turning back towards Hopper. “Monsters are coming out of the walls, Will was abducted to another dimension and a telepathic alien virus or monster or whatever it is tried to kill us!”

“And that government lab opened a portal to another dimension and I took in a girl who can move things with her mind. Joyce, believe me, I *get* it. Weird shit has happened. I'm not saying this dream of yours wasn't a vision, but why you? If you said Will was having visions again then I'd believe it, but why would *you* be having visions of the Mind Flayer?”

Joyce slowly sank back down onto her chair. “I don't know... I did go into the Upside Down once, but that was over a year ago and you were with me then. Have you had any visions?” Hopper shook his head and Joyce buried her face in her hands.

Hopper tapped his fingers on the table for a few seconds. “Okay. Forget whether the vision is real or not for a minute. Tell me what you saw, all of it.”

“Okay... well it was a school day and I was making breakfast for my boys. Bacon and eggs. I yelled at them to get up a couple of times, but neither of them answered so I thought they were still asleep. So I went to check on Jonathan and he wasn't in his room. The strange thing about it was how clean his room was. I'm not calling him messy, but he's a teenager and a teenager's room shouldn't ever be *that* clean. Will's room was the same way so I decided to check if they were outside and that was where things got weird.”

“What do you mean?” The sheriff asked as his brow began to furrow.

“It... my house looked normal and so did some of the trees but everything else was... blurry and the further away something was from my house the worse it was. It was a lot warmer than it should have been and it was way too quiet, like nothing was out there but me. Then *it* showed up...”

“The Mind Flayer? You saw the thing Will drew?” asked Hopper, prompting her to continue.

“No, not exactly... the thing in Will's drawing was black and it was huge. What I saw was silver and it wasn't that big really. Maybe as tall as I am and six feet across I guess? It was the exact same shape as what he drew though.”

“What happened after it showed up? Did it attack you or anything?”

Joyce slowly shook her head. “No, it just stood there looking at me and then I tried to run it over with my car. It turned back into smoke or something so I went through it and I was about to hit a tree when I woke up.”

Jim sat there for a moment before pulling out his pack of cigarettes and tapping it on the table. “Okay, here's what I think. Maybe this is real, maybe it isn't, but the color and size you described doesn't quite sound like the Mind Flayer to me. If you have another dream let me know. In the meantime I'll go take a look around Hawkins Lab and see if anything is happening there.” He stopped playing with the pack and pulled a cigarette out while leaning towards Joyce. “If the Mind

Flayer is attacking your dreams then we could be in trouble again. Telling your sons about this or not is your call, but if I was in your shoes then I'd tell Jonathan just to be on the safe side. If you end up getting possessed like Will was then that's bad news for all of us."

Joyce put her hand on top of Jim's and squeezed it gratefully. "Thank you."

After he had left Joyce got up from the table and headed to her room. She opened her closet door and lifted the lid off one of the boxes on the floor. Tucked away at the bottom, beneath a pile of sheets, was a single piece of paper covered in wax. Hopper had been right about one thing at least. The thing she had seen in her dream had the same shape as her son's drawing of the Mind Flayer, but the colors were different. Whether the two were the same she didn't know, but there was only one way to find out, but nighttime was still several hours away.

3. Chapter 3

Joyce didn't dream again that night or the next few days either. It wasn't until a full week after her conversation with Hopper that her second vision began.

Just like the first time she was in her house, but seated on a couch in the living room instead of in the kitchen. She slowly stood up and went down the hallway to Jonathan's room. It was identical to before, too tidy and lacking her son's presence. As was Will's. Joyce went back to the kitchen to check what day it was supposed to be. Tuesday.

The air outside of her house had the same unnatural warmth as her first dream, but Joyce paid it no mind while making her way to the shed. She grabbed a rifle off the wall and began loading bullets into its magazine. The rounds were only .22 caliber and might not even be enough to protect herself from the creature should it appear, but this gun was the only one she owned. She checked the safety before grabbing another box of bullets while heading to her car out front. Will and Jonathan might not be here, but it was possible other people from Hawkins were. She set the gun on the passenger's seat and turned the ignition to start the engine.

As her vehicle headed down the dirt road, Joyce could see a silver sphere forming in her rear view mirror and she turned her head to look back at it. "You again." Running it over hadn't worked, but she could try running away. Joyce pressed down on her accelerator and the car lurched forward as it took off. The vehicle's tires squealed in protest as Joyce turned sharply onto the main road leading towards town.

For a few moments the road behind her was clear, but then the sphere came barreling out onto the street. Her car was the exact opposite of fast, however she had still been able to get a quarter of a mile down the road by then. The dial on her dashboard swung clockwise until it was hovering by the number '70'. Despite her speed the creature was still able to steadily gain on her until it was only a hundred feet or so behind her. Once there it stopped drawing closer and stayed at that distance as she drew closer and closer to the city.

During her first vision she had noticed that the trees further away from her house were blurry. It was a trait that was even more noticeable here, the trees a mass of brown and green on both sides. The road, on the other hand, was a strikingly sharp line of black asphalt and yellow stripes. As she drew closer to the town, Joyce had been keeping her eye out for other cars. There hadn't been any, it was just her and the creature on the road thus far.

The trend continued even as she slowed down while passing through the town's outskirts and into downtown. No cars, no trucks or even any pedestrians on the sidewalks. The buildings and houses lining the edge of the road looked normal, but when she peered past them she could see the ones further away showing that same peculiar blurriness as the trees. The most disappointing thing of her trip through downtown was that Melvald's General Store was painfully clear, but that only lasted until she saw the Radioshack next to it. The front door was normal, but the edges of the storefront were blurred. Joyce swallowed and forced her now watery eyes back towards the road. It had been two months and the sight of that particular store was still painful.

Her place of work and the Radioshack vanished behind her as she kept going. A few minutes later and she arrived at her destination. The high school's parking lot was empty of both cars and students and there weren't any buses in front of the middle school either. Joyce pressed down on her brake and dropped her head back against

the headrest as her vehicle came to a stop. The odds of finding her sons here had been slim, but it had been her last hope. If they weren't at the schools then they probably weren't anywhere in this vision of hers. Neither was anyone else. It was just Joyce and this creature.

She grabbed the rifle and double checked that the safety was off before getting out of the car. The sphere was still nearby, hovering in place. Joyce raised the butt of her gun to her shoulder and pointed it towards the creature.

“What do you want!?” She yelled at it.

The sphere remained motionless for a moment and then the metallic surface began to ripple and flow outwards. After it had finished taking shape its eyeless head turned towards Joyce. One leg lifted up off the ground and moved forward painstaking inch by painstaking inch. Joyce adjusted her grip on the rifle and the thing stopped in the middle of putting its foot down and tilted its head almost like a dog would. Once it became clear she wasn't about to pull the trigger the creature started moving again. Each footstep was as slow as the first and bit by bit it covered the distance between them.

Eventually it had gotten close enough for its purpose. It raised its right foot upwards then outwards just as slowly as it had approached her. Joyce's hands trembled on the rifle and she very nearly pulled back as the bird like appendages approached her. A tiny voice inside of her was screaming to run away, to not let it touch her, but her feet remained rooted to the ground for some reason. Whether it was how slowly the thing had approached or possibly something else, a more visceral reaction from beyond the conscious parts of her mind, she didn't know. Either way one of those digits stopped just short of the very center of her forehead.

Joyce's eyes fluttered closed of their own accord and she could feel... *something*. Her eyes were shut, the thing wasn't actually touching her, and there was no smell or sound. Whatever this feeling actually *was*, it was from a sense she had never used before and certainly not one she had ever been taught. Whatever it was pressed against *her* then words and their meaning began to rise to the surface of her thoughts. A few at first, like a faucet dripping water, then even more as the handle was turned so to speak. They flew faster and faster until she could no longer keep track of the flood. Then it ceased as suddenly as it had begun and the presence abruptly vanished. Joyce's eyes flew open and she stumbled backwards before falling onto the grass.

'Are you all right Joyce?'

Joyce's mouth fell open as she stared up at the creature in shock. The creature had no mouth that she could see and yet somehow it was communicating in English— and it somehow knew her name. It wasn't even actually words as she knew the coming from the outside. Instead there was a metallic hum reverberating against the inside of her skull, and somehow she just *knew* what was meant by it.

Before she could respond however, swathes of crimson shot through its misty surface as its head jerked up towards the sky. Joyce looked up as well and her mouth snapped shut at the sight of the clouds directly above them beginning to furiously writhe.

'You must go.'

Suddenly the grass beneath her vanished and she was falling into a void where there was nothing all around her. For a moment she

could still see the place she had been, but as if from a great distance. Then it was gone and Joyce's eyes snapped open to see shadowed tree branches dancing across her bedroom ceiling.

4. Chapter 4

"It... talked to you?" Hopper had been listening without any expression, but a frown had settled onto his face as she recounted the last part of her second dream.

"Kinda? I don't know if you could call it talking, but I could understand what it meant. It's hard to explain... but the point is that it knew my name and then there's the other thing it said. 'You must go.' The more I think about that, the more I think it was trying to protect me." Joyce's eyes flicked up towards the ceiling as she recalled how the clouds had been moving. "Something was happening in the sky and the creature seemed scared so it made me wake up."

Hopper shook his head and looked down the hallway towards her son's rooms.

"So I went to the lab a couple days ago. It's locked up pretty tight, but Owens made sure I could get in before he left. There aren't any vines and the Gate's still shut. I even rappelled down to the bottom to check. Whatever is happening to you isn't coming from the lab. Other than that, I don't know what to tell you Joyce. There's a reason I joined the Army. I'm not an egghead who can figure this kind of thing out. Have you told Jonathan yet?"

Joyce's gaze fell to the table and she just mutely shook her head.

"Seriously? Goddamn it Joyce. Your dreams are getting visited by an alien like the one that possessed Will, and you haven't told anyone but me!?"

“I know, I know. I was going to, but then I didn't have another dream for a few days. I was starting to think it might have just been a dream after all until last night.” Joyce looked up from the table. “I'll talk to him after I get home from work today.”

“All right that's fine. I'll be there if shit goes south, but Jonathan needs to know so he can keep an eye on you.”

By the time Joyce got home Jonathan was listening to music in his room while he read one of his textbooks. Joyce looked down the hallway before leaning against the doorway to Jonathan's room. “Do you know where Will is Jonathan?”

Jonathan looked up from his book, startled from his reading. “Will? He went to Mike's place. They're playing D&D tonight. Something wrong Mom?”

Joyce let out a sigh and stepped inside without asking before she sat down on the edge of her son's bed. “I had... a vision.”

Her son visibly hesitated, then stuck a piece of paper in the book before closing it. “A vision?”

“I'm not sure what to call it really.” Joyce admitted. “Maybe dream is

better, but it doesn't matter what we call it. The point is that I'm being contacted by something that looks just like the Mind Flayer."

Her son had been confused by her first comment, but now she had his full attention. "What do you mean the Mind Flayer is contacting you mom!?"

"A week ago I had a dream. At first it seemed real, but once I got outside I began to realize something was wrong. Then this thing showed up. It's the same shape as Will's drawing of the Mind Flayer, but it was a lot smaller and a different color too."

"So?" asked Jonathan. "We don't know anything about the Mind Flayer. Maybe it's just a disguise. If it's getting into your dreams then it's possible it could take you over. We can't let that happen!"

Joyce reached over to squeeze her son's hand. "I know and I don't want that to happen, but there's nothing we can do to keep it away. Hopper says the Gate is still shut, and this has already happened twice. You have to keep an eye on me, see if I'm doing anything strange."

"So what, I'm supposed to watch you and try and just guess if the thing is taking you over? This seems like a really bad idea mom. Isn't there anything else we can do?"

"Well the creature didn't like heat... that's it!" Joyce hopped off the bed then excitedly turned back towards Jonathan. "After Will got infected his body temperature dropped and he was afraid of hot water. We can take my temperature in the morning and see if it

changes. Will dropped to ninety-five or ninety-four degrees. So that's what we'll do. That okay with you Jonathan?"

"Sure. It's better than just guessing, but what if Will asks why I'm taking your temperature every day?"

"We'll have to hide what we're doing from Will. I don't like keeping this from him, but he's gone through so much already..."

"Okay fine, that's your decision. What do you want me to do if it turns out you are infected?" asked Jonathan.

"Then you'll have to get Hopper, Steve, maybe Nancy too, and burn it out of me. We already know it works."

Her son didn't say anything at first, but she knew he was also thinking of that night in Hopper's cabin. Will thrashing against his restraints, the heaters glowing red, the fire blazing, sweat pouring from all of them, Will's fingers digging into her throat as the monster forced him to try and squeeze the life out of her... They *had* succeeded in driving it out, but the ordeal wasn't one any of them cared to repeat, with Joyce on the bed this time no less.

"Fine." muttered Jonathan, looking none too happy with the task he was being given. "If that's what it takes, then I'll do it."

"Right..." Joyce hesitated for a moment before leaving the room. With that out of the way they were now prepared for the worst.

Whether or not it would come to that she couldn't say. Only time, and further dreams, would tell.

5. Chapter 5

Joyce was sitting on the couch in her living room. The television was powered off and there was a silence throughout the room. She took a deep breath and slowly stood up. There was a clock hanging on the wall in the kitchen and its hands were frozen in place on nineteen, eight, and six. Joyce frowned at it before turning and heading out the front door, already knowing what she would find.

The silver creature was already outside in the yard. Its head turned towards Joyce as she walked off the porch. Joyce stopped moving when she was twenty feet away and lazily waved one hand at the area around them. "What is this? I know it's not Hawkins even though it looks like it is."

The metallic hum from before returned as it replied. 'This is Hawkins as you know it. What we see here is not my creation, it is yours. I brought us together, but what we see here comes from you.'

"Why do you look like the Mind Flayer? Is he one of your kind?"

The creature's silver mists turned crimson and that hum became a strident rasp, as if rusted metal was grinding together. 'We know of whom you speak. That one is the Abomination and he is not one of us!'

Joyce pressed her hands against her ears to no avail as she fell to her knees. "You're hurting me!"

The red disappeared and an even duller silver than before appeared and the creature bowed its head. After a moment it spoke again, its voice back to a pleasant hum. 'Accept our apologies. We did not mean to harm you, but that one vexes us greatly.'

"What did he do to make you so angry?" asked Joyce, suddenly hopeful. If the Mind Flayer and this creature were enemies then she might have just found an ally.

The creature changed color once again, this time to a cobalt shade of blue. "That one was a part of us in days long passed. The one whom you call Mind Flayer wished to bring in those who are separate into our collective, but not as members. We rejected that desire and that one split from us. Now the Abomination seeks to form a collective that serves the whims of one.'

Joyce pushed herself back onto her feet as she tried to understand what she had just been told. "Those who are separate? What does that mean?"

'The thoughts of your kind are all separate from each other, save for a few. Our kind is together. We are many, but we are also one.'

"Save for a few? You're saying there's humans whose minds are connected like yours are?"

The creature turned its head towards the forest for a moment then back at Joyce. "Today no, but someday perhaps. The one you call Eleven is a possibility of what Humans may become. She lacks the ability to form a collective like ours however. There are others who

lack power, but have become sensitive from being exposed to what you call the Upside Down.'

"Like Will or... me and Hopper because we went in to get him."

'Yes. Your son's time in that plane is what makes him vulnerable to the Abomination and your time there gives us the ability to visit your dreams.'

That explained how at the very least. She still wasn't seeing the whole picture though. "But why are you visiting *me*? Hopper's the sheriff."

'We considered our choices carefully. Your son and the one called Eleven... their minds as well as their bodies are undeveloped. The one called Hopper is old enough, but his mind is... troubling. We sense many dark things in his memories that distress us. You have darkness in you as well, but from the actions of the Abomination. You are the better choice for our purpose.'

Joyce let out a nervous laugh as she took a long step backwards. "Uhh... your purpose? What do you mean?"

'We are explorers searching for life different than our own. We are curious.'

"What, like Star Trek?" asked Joyce.

'We do not understand. Star Trek? Are you asking if we travel the stars?'

"Star Trek. It's, uh, a television show where a group of people traveled around on a spaceship, explored planets, met other races and that sort of thing." Joyce raised one hand, palm facing towards the creature, and parted her fingers. "Live long and prosper."

'We think we understand and the answer is no. We do not travel the stars in that manner. It takes light one hundred thousand of your years to travel from one side of your galaxy to the other and there are billions of galaxies on your plane alone. However the mind can transcend both great distances and planes.'

"So you're doing this to learn about Humanity?" Now there was an idea. If she could show these creatures that Humans were worthwhile then maybe they could be persuaded to help with the Mind Flayer.

"Yes. Your kind is something new and we are curious about you. Economics, politics, your culture, how you sexually reproduce-"

"Excuse me!?" Joyce cut him off mid-sentence, standing up straighter as she stared in disbelief at what the thing had just said.

The creature's head craned away from her back towards the forest and it stood very, very still for several long moments. Eventually it turned back and the mild hum was gone, the more sonorous tone of a great bell being rung taking its place. 'We apologize for our crassness.

The one whose avatar you see is the youngest of us and this is the first time that one has led contact with a new kind. If you wish a different representative then we will oblige.'

"I... no that's not necessary. Talking about sex isn't exactly polite conversation for my race. Well some of us anyways."

'Very well. We will ensure that this one is reminded of the importance of being wary about possible taboos when contacting a new kind. We will resume contact in three of your days.'

This time Joyce was prepared for this place disappearing around her. Falling down a dark void was still unsettling, but at least she knew where she was going to end up this time. Joyce turned her head to look at her clock. Ten fifty. She had only been asleep for twenty minutes in the real world. She sighed and rolled back onto her side as she closed her eyes.

6. Chapter 6

Three days until the next visit. Three days to figure out what she was supposed to tell those creatures about humans. Making it worse was the fact that she didn't actually have a full three days. A telepathic alien species might be visiting her dreams, but that didn't change the fact she still had bills to pay.

Her free time outside of work was split between searching through the catalogs of the library and going over the items she had checked out at home. She had taken history classes when she was younger, but those days were long behind her. Culture, economics, politics. Those were three of the areas that the creature had mentioned to her. There had been a fourth, but she was doing her best to put that one out of her mind.

The question that vexed her was how to condense thousands of years of human history into something that she could talk about. It was like giving a report in school, but instead of having the class for an audience she was going to have an entire alien race listening to her.

Where did she even begin for that matter? What subjects would appeal to beings that telepathically scoured the universe for curiosities? How many other races had they done this with? What could she tell them that they hadn't already heard a thousand times from a thousand different races?

“Hey mom, the game's starting. You're going to miss the tipoff!”

Joyce set the encyclopedia aside as she got up and headed towards the living room where Jonathan was yelling from. “Right. Who are

we playing tonight?”

“Wisconsin.”

“Are they ranked?” asked Joyce. “I can't remember.”

“No. Illinois's fifteen right now. Michigan just dropped out of the top twenty-five, but Michigan State and Iowa just made it in. Wisconsin is eight and three though so I don't think we can count them out.”

She shrugged it off. “I'm not too worried about Wisconsin. Coach Knight's the one who scares me. You never know when he'll go off on the refs.”

On the television screen players from both teams darted around until one of the Indiana players cut to the rim and laid it in for their first bucket of the game. As the Wisconsin players in-bounded the ball, it suddenly dawned on Joyce what the first thing she could show the aliens was.

True to their word, the silver creature was waiting for in her front yard. It took a few steps forward and bowed its head towards Joyce.

'We hope you are not still angry with this one's prior offense.'

Joyce just shook her head. “No, not really. Just don't bring it up again. If I want to discuss it then I'll let you know. I have a question though. What do I call you?”

'Do you mean our kind? In truth we have no name for ourselves though others have called us many things. The most common would be Investigators in your language.'

“No. I mean you. This one.” Joyce pointed at the creature in front of her. “You all might be connected to each others thoughts, but all I see is this guy. What is *his* name?”

The creature's surface pulsed brighter and it turned its head towards the forest. After a moment it turned back towards Joyce. 'We do not have names for each other for we do not need them. However we understand those who are separate require them. You may call this one whatever you wish.'

Joyce pursed her lips for a moment. “Silver. I'm going to call you silver.”

There was a brief pause as the creature looked down at one of its legs. 'Silver? Ah. You choose this because of the color you perceive. We accept this choice.'

Silver raised its head to look at Joyce once again. 'Have you thought about what you wish to discuss?'

“Yeah I came up with something.” She started feeling the outside of her pockets. “I just gotta get my keys first.”

'Your keys?'

“So I can drive my car. Where we're going is a few miles away and it'll take me a while to walk there.”

Silver walked forward towards Joyce and raised one of its digits towards her forehead. 'There is no need for that. Close your eyes and picture yourself at the place you wish to be in your mind.'

Joyce lifted an eyebrow before shrugging and closing her eyes like instructed. Bleachers pushed up against the wall, a hardwood floor painted with lines beneath her feet, the ceiling high above them and a basketball rim on each end of the court. When she opened her eyes again the image was surrounding the two of them.

Silver's misty form pulsed and it raised its head while looking around the gymnasium. 'What is this?'

“It's a basketball court, Silver.”

'What is basketball?'

Joyce wandered over towards the edge of the court where a rack of orange leather balls stood and picked one up. She dribbled it on the court while walking back towards Silver. "It's a sport humans play and it's pretty popular here in Indiana." Joyce hoisted a shot up, but it bounced off the rim and she hurried after it before banking a second shot off the backboard.

'We see. An athletic contest. How is it played?'

"It's a team game, usually five on five. There's a hoop assigned to each team that they have to protect." Joyce pointed at the rims standing opposite each other. "The goal of the game is to put this ball through the other team's hoop. You get two points if you shoot from within this line here." She pointed at an arcing line on the floor. "Three points if you shoot from outside of it, but that's a new rule. Winner is the team with the most points when time runs out."

'Interesting. The premise is simple, but the hoop is not very large so it requires precise aiming to put a ball through it. We would like to watch a game of this contest being played.'

"I'm just one person Silver. I can't play a game all by myself and you kinda don't have hands to hold the ball with..."

Silver's head swiveled as he looked at the court then his head turned towards the wall. Joyce frowned to herself before realizing he was looking towards the forest again, but from another direction this time. After a minute Silver returned his attention to her. 'Do you have any recordings of this contest? We do not believe using your memories to view a match of unknown length with ten participants is viable.'

"I have a tape of Indiana playing North Carolina for the national championship in eight-one." Joyce said. "Though I don't know if it'll play in... whatever this place is."

"That won't be a problem. This tape you mention is at your home?"

"Yes."

'Then picture your home like you did before when you sought to bring us to this gym.'

Once back in the confines of her living room Joyce looked over at Silver. "Now what? If this whole place is based off my memories, then this won't work. It's been years since I watched this game."

'Find this tape you spoke of and focus your attention on it. If you draw it into this dreamscape, then it will function as in your world.'

Joyce frowned to herself while looking through the tapes until she found the right one. The writing on the label was fuzzy almost to the point of being illegible. She pulled the tape out of the drawer then the tape out of its sleeve. As she watched the blurred piece of plastic seemed like it was shimmering and in seconds the tape looked just like it would in the waking world. She stuck it in the VCR before grabbing the remotes and setting up the playback.

'We would like to know how long a single game lasts and we also wish you to explain the nuances of this contest to us.'

“Well there's two twenty minute halves, but a typical college basketball game takes about two hours.” Joyce said as she sat down on the couch. “As for how its played... that guy right there with the ball is Isiah Thomas. He's a point guard which puts him in charge of bringing the ball up the floor and running our offense.”

Starting with the positions was easy enough, but explaining things like Bob Knight's motion offense would be far more difficult. Regardless she had no intention of letting the challenge deter her from trying.

7. Chapter 7

“Let me get this straight, mom. These things want to learn stuff about humans.”

“Yes.”

“So you explained basketball to them and you ended up watching that game where Indiana beat North Carolina for the title?” Jonathan's mouth slowly opened and closed as he stared at her, struggling to process what his mother had just told him. “You think after everything's that happened I would be getting a grip on this stuff, but it just keeps getting weirder and weirder.”

“I know, Jonathan, I know. We just have to muddle through this the best we can. You got the thermometer?”

Jonathan handed her the glass tube and Joyce promptly closed her lips around it. “Question for you, mom.” Joyce gave her son a quizzical look, prompting him to continue. “They're trying to learn about us, but have you considered trying to learn about them?”

Joyce shook her head from side to side and shrugged. “Mmmmph...”

“Well you should think about it. If these things are the same race as the Mind Flayer, then anything you learn about them could help us with him if he ever comes back.”

Once enough seconds had passed Joyce took the thermometer out and handed it to her son for confirmation of the temperature. "I'll try that, Jonathan. Did you finish recording that mix-tape I asked you for?"

"Hmm? Oh yeah, I got that done last night." Johnathan stuck one hand in his coat pocket as he pulled out a cassette tape. "Took a while though since all the songs on your list were from different people. By the way the librarian made a few suggestions for classical songs and I added those at the end. This is for the aliens isn't it?"

"Yeah it is. I figured music is something they'd be interested in. No idea what kind of stuff they might like so I tried to cover a bunch of different styles."

Jonathan set the tape down on the table as he stood up. "Right. Well I need to get to work. Good luck listening to music with a bunch of aliens."

Her son did a terrible job of hiding his grin as he took off, and Joyce just shook her head. As outlandish as a statement as it was, Joyce couldn't deny it was true. She hadn't exactly chosen this, lord knew she wasn't qualified, but the fact she had become some sort of an ambassador was beginning to grow on her.

'Hello, Joyce.'

Silver was waiting for her outside as was the creature's custom. Joyce had a cassette player, with Jonathan's mixtape already inside, in hand as she greeted the alien. "Hey Silver. Ready for... today? This session? This visit? I don't know what I'm supposed to call these."

'An interesting question, but the simplest solution is usually the best. Visits will suffice. As for your question, the answer is yes, we are ready.'

"Okay then. We're going somewhere so I need you to help me do that teleporting thing." Joyce closed her eyes and started to paint a picture in her mind. At first nothing happened, but then she could *feel* something change in the air around her and they moved.

Silver lowered its leg back to the ground as it looked around the parking lot they were standing in. 'Where are we?'

"The music store." Joyce said as she held a glass door open. Silver took a few steps forward before stopping shy of the doorway. Its limbs retracted back into itself and the ensuing sphere floated inside. "This is where people buy instruments and stuff. Over there are drums. Those are guitars and these are violins." Joyce pointed each instrument out as she walked, and it floated, through the store. "This thing is a trumpet, that one's a tuba. Keyboards are over there, and I think these are flutes and clarinets, though I don't know what these other ones are."

'Vibrating cords and instruments that alter the flow of air are common, however these shapes are some of the most complex we have encountered. It seems having five digits gives your kind an advantage in this regard. We are curious about this keyboard however. The means of interaction is obvious, but we cannot tell how

sound is produced just by looking at it.'

"It's electronic. Like it uses computer parts or something. I don't really understand how it works to be honest." Joyce admitted.

'Very well. Are we correct in assuming the device in your hands is some sort of music player?'

"Huh? Oh, yeah it is. Humans listen to a lot of different stuff so trying to figure out what to play was kinda difficult. I have a list here if you want to read it." She rummaged in her pocket for a moment and pulled out a wrinkled piece of paper.

'You can tell us the names as the songs are playing.'

"Okay." Joyce pressed down on the play button and the reels of film began to turn as music played.

Well, since my baby left me
Well, I found a new place to dwell
Well, it's down at the end of Lonely Street
At Heartbreak Hotel

The voice of Elvis Presley had barely gotten through the songs first stanza when Silver turned an alarmingly bright shade of orange, and jagged spikes were jutting out then retracting at random. It dashed towards the front door and the hum that was Silver's voice was now squealing incomprehensibly.

Joyce started mashing down on the cassette players switches until the music shut off. Silver's form continued to spasm for a few seconds before stilling. It remained orange however, the hue not dimming any as she approached. "Are you all right?" she asked.

'That voice... it interferes with our connection. The others were gone while it played...' Joyce could hear a note of genuine horror as Silver's voice trailed off.

"Okay, no more Elvis." Joyce pressed down on the fast forward button until she figured she had gotten to the next song.

'Will any of the singers sound like Elvis? We would prefer not to have our connection interrupted again.'

"No, Elvis had a pretty unique singing voice. Robert Plant and Michael Jackson are pretty crazy in their own right though." She pushed the fast forward button again. "I'm just going to play it safe and skip to the classical songs at the end."

'Out of curiosity, what are the names of the people you're skipping?'

Joyce smoothed the piece of paper out. "The bands on here are Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and 'Earth Wind and Fire' just because I like them. There's a few singers as well. Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, and Frank Sinatra."

'We cannot pretend those names mean anything to us, but we will assume that you did well to pick them.'

"Oh, well thank you..."

'Except for Elvis. That was a very inauspicious choice, but we do not believe you had any knowledge of what his singing would do to us. We wish to try again with a different song when you are ready.'

"Yeah, just a minute. Finding the start of a song is kinda tricky." Joyce turned the volume down as she fiddled with the rewind and fast forward buttons until she found the part of the tape where the song she wanted began. "So this first is the overture of... Le Nozze di Figaro." Joyce stumbled her way through the name of the song, but thankfully Silver and the others listening in wouldn't have any idea she was butchering it. "The guy who wrote it is called Mozart. He's a musician from a couple hundred years ago. I think he's German, but don't quote me on that."

She didn't know what the instruments were, but their effect on Silver was immediately obvious. The orange hue to its skin quickly vanished, but it wasn't replaced by silver like she was accustomed to seeing. Instead a golden honey appeared, but it brightened and, dimmed seemingly at random, as she watched. It took Joyce a minute before she realized the pattern wasn't random at all. All of those pulses were synchronized with the music itself, almost like a person tapping a foot to the beat.

"You liked that didn't you?" Joyce asked when the song had ended.

'Very much so. There were only a few instruments and yet they conveyed a great variety of sound. We have not encountered a music so pleasant in many years.'

"Okay then. There's three more songs on this list." Joyce looked back down at the piece of paper as she rattled the remaining entries off. "Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy', Hungarian Dance Five by Brahms and Blue Danube by Strauss."

'We wish to make a proposal to you. Once these songs are finished we would like to demonstrate what the music of our kind is like. However there is a drawback.'

Now there was something she hadn't been expecting, but in a way it was a reasonable request. She was showing them what Human music was like so they were trying to return the favor. "What kind of drawback?"

'We are responsible for making the connection between our minds possible, but we have left control of this dreamscape to you. In order for this demonstration to take place we would need you to share that control with us. We understand if that makes you uncomfortable, and we will not press the matter if you decline.'

Share control. Joyce didn't entirely understand what the Investigators meant when they said dreamscape, but she knew that sharing control was a risk. If she agreed to their request then she would effectively be putting herself at their mercy due to the fact she only had inklings of how to manipulate this place compared to the aliens who were responsible for the dreamscape existing in the first place.

Furthermore there was a chance that doing this might make it possible for her to become infected like Will had been...

That raised the question of whether or not she actually had to worry about that. The Investigators hadn't shown any signs of aggression towards her that she could recall. If anything, *she* had been the violent one. During their first encounter Joyce had tried to run it over with her car, she had pointed a gun at it during their second, and she had inadvertently disrupted Silver's connection to its kin just now. Despite all that they had only mildly rebuked her for Elvis.

"How do I give you control?"

Silver floated towards her and part of its surface flowed outwards until a smaller copy of one front leg was almost touching her forehead.

'This version of Hawkins only exists in our thoughts. What we see here is an illusion. Clear your mind and let go.'

Joyce flexed her fingers and exhaled softly. This wasn't real. She wasn't actually in Hawkins. She just thought she was and the dreamscape was reflecting that. The instruments and building around them shimmered then vanished from sight leaving behind an inky black void. Joyce's eyelids lowered themselves, seemingly of their own accord, as Silver's thoughts brushed against hers again. The touch was faint, yet even so she could sense something was now missing when it retreated. After a moment she could feel a smooth surface beneath her feet.

'Open your eyes.'

Joyce was standing at the edge of a dome with an apex stood a hundred feet in the air and the far side opposite her was the same distance . The floor was made from some sort of uniformly violet mineral, and it was perfectly level without even a single crack or groove marring its surface. The main attraction of the room lay dead ahead of her.

An enormous spire made from what looked like jade reached halfway to the dome's peak stood in the very center, walls and ceiling both equidistant from it. It was thick at the base, but grew narrower as it went up until the tip was no thicker than Joyce's wrist. Joyce glanced at Silver. "Can I take a closer look?"

'By all means.'

Once she was at the structures side it became immediately obvious that the spire wasn't solid. Its interior had been carved in a myriad of ways. Parts of it were as thick as maple tree trunks while others had been thinned to the width of a baseball bat. In other areas stalactites and stalagmites pointed at each other. Furthermore she could see rounded holes of varying sizes all over the crystal structure's both inside and outside.

"What is this thing Silver?" Joyce asked with a quizzical look at her companion.

'You will see. We should return to the edge of the dome for the proper acoustics.'

Once there Joyce turned around back around only to find they were no longer alone. A dozen other spheres the same color as Silver were now floating around the spire. She glanced at Silver then back at them as they began stretching out until they looked almost like eels floating around. Then one of them drifted downwards towards the spire, disappearing through one of those holes before coming out on the other side. At first its pace was languid as it drifted through the spire's openings, but it gradually began to move faster and faster until it was a blur. A sonorous knell emanated from the spire, the sound carried to and over Joyce from multiple directions by the curved ceiling and walls.

As the sound dissipated the other aliens darted towards the spire, and disappeared into other holes like the first one had. Further peals rang out into the dome as they soared up into the air only to twist around and dive back into it once again. Some of the peals were half as deep as the first had been while others pinged like someone rubbing their finger on the rim of a wine glass.

Joyce stood rooted to the spot in awe as she watched the acrobatic display. At first it had seemed like chaos, but as it progressed she began to see patterns in their movements. Each trip through the spire was precisely coordinated with all the others so that no two notes were played at the same time. The end result was a continuous stream of harmony washing over her, an effect only amplified by the dome. She didn't just hear a note once before it faded. Instead the sounds were coming to her, and then looping around the walls and ceilings before returning again.

The music built up to a frenzied crescendo that ended with every performer combining to form a single transcendent chord. The dome would have been silent except for the sound of a woman clapping her hands together.

'What does this gesture mean? Are you satisfied with our performance?' Silver asked.

"It's called applause. Humans do it to show approval. It means we liked something a lot." Joyce replied. "I've never heard anything like that before. It was beautiful." She repeated the gesture to emphasize her words.

'We are glad you enjoyed our performance. We would not mind doing this again so long as we get to listen to the other songs on your list. For now this is a good place to end this visit. Sleep well Joyce.'

8. Chapter 8

“Elvis.”

“Yes.”

“You're telling me that Elvis hurts them. The King. Elvis Presley.” Hopper wiped a hand over his face. “Jesus Christ. That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard, Joyce. If the Mind Flayer ever comes back, then we'll play Hound Dog and that'll save us all.”

“I know, it sounds really stupid.” Joyce admitted. “You didn't see how... it reacted though, Jim. I think Elvis really did mess with their connection. I don't know for sure if he'll do the same thing to the Mind Flayer, but this could be a trump card for us if we ever need it.”

The sheriff just wearily shook his head at the notion. “I'll stick to guns if it's all the same to you. Anyways, how are you holding up? Anything I can do to help you out with this stuff?”

Joyce took a drink from her cup of coffee before shaking her head slightly. “No. I've gotten it all under control. Thanks for asking though, Jim.”

Jim pushed himself up to his feet. “Right then, you know where to find me if you need anything.”

The front door to the Byers house swung open and Joyce waved at Silver from the other side. "Come on in. We're doing this one inside."

Silver's legs and head retracted into itself and it floated forwards into the house. Once inside it resumed its limbed form in the middle of the living room. Joyce shut the door then moved to sit down on the floor next to a sphere mounted on a plastic stand. Its surface was mostly blue, but several areas ranged between orange or green. Bumps protruded from the ball in multiple locations and black letters were printed all over.

"So this is my planet. Earth. The surface is mostly water, but we have seven continents." Her finger roamed over the surface as she pointed at each in turn. "Australia, Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Antarctica down here at the bottom."

'Why are Europe and Asia separate continents? We can see that the others are distinct from each other, but Europe and Asia appear to be one landmass.'

Joyce frowned as she looked at the continents in question. "I think Europe and Asia might be on different tectonic plates. It's been a long time since I took a geology class so don't quote me on that."

'What are all the words written on your model? Names of regions?'

“Those are the names of different countries.” Joyce explained. “This is Canada, that's the United States, this one here is Mexico.” She spun the globe to her right. “China, the Soviet Union, East Germany, West Germany and that's France.”

'Your kind are still divided? Most races we have encountered are united or near to it by the time they begin to attract notice from other species.'

“What do you mean united? Like a single government ruling over an entire race?”

'Essentially yes. It is commonplace for races to learn that they progress faster when they choose to live in harmony. There are exceptions, but they are not so common.'

“I guess humans are part of the second group then.” Joyce muttered to herself, the idea sounding less than appealing to her.

'We do not mean to insult humans. Your race will progress in time. Let us move on. Where are you located on this model?'

She turned the globe then pushed her finger against her hometown's general location. “Hawkins is too small to show up on a globe, but we're right about here. Hawkins, Indiana, USA.”

'USA?'

“United States of America. It's the country I live in.”

'Tell us about the USA. What kind of political and economic systems do you have?'

“Uhhh, well the US is a couple hundred years old. We were part of this country here-” Joyce pointed a set of islands near the European mainland. “-but we revolted and formed our own country. We're a democracy so we vote for our government. Mayors run cities, governors run states, each state has senators and representatives in Congress, and we have a president.”

'What about economics?'

“We're capitalists. People get paid to work for companies who make products that people want to buy basically.”

Silver's head craned towards the wall for a moment before looking back at her. 'Does your economy solely consist of free markets and private ownership or does your government play a role?'

Joyce stared blankly as she tried to come up with an answer to that. “The government regulates some stuff. Monopolies aren't allowed. Electric companies have limits on the prices they can charge. I have to be honest though, Silver. I'm the wrong person to ask about this kind of stuff. You should be talking to someone like Carl Sagan or someone else from NASA, not me. I'm a single mother from the middle of nowhere.'

'We have no qualms with you not being able to fully answer our questions. Quite the opposite actually. The fact that there are gaps in the things you tell us invites speculation and discussion among our kind.'

Her brow furrowed as she gave Silver a flabbergasted look. "Wait, what? You like that I can't tell you some stuff? I don't understand."

'How to explain this...' It seemed like Silver was muttering to itself more than speaking to Joyce. 'You understand we are a collective correct?'

"I'm not sure what you mean by collective. Is that a way of saying your whole species is connected telepathically?"

'Yes. All of our kind can sense the thoughts and memories of the others. Such a connection has its advantages, but it also has its costs. There are no secrets among us. Nothing is hidden or could be considered a surprise. The only time we do not know something about one of our collective is when a new member is created, yet even that is temporary.'

So that was the point of this whole affair. "This is why you are so interested in learning about new species isn't it?"

'Yes. There are no unknowns among ourselves so we actively seek it out wherever we can. When we look at you, for instance, we can only guess at what you are thinking. The only things we know about you

and your kind is what you tell us, and you only do that in pieces. We enjoy learning about other species, but we also enjoy trying to predict the unknown. In time we will be in contact with those who can give in-depth answers to our questions, but we are content with you.'

"Okay... " muttered Joyce. "There anything else you want to know about?"

'There is something we are curious about, but we are afraid of offending you again.'

"What is it?" Joyce cautiously asked. "If it's something I don't want to talk about then I'll just say no."

'Human anatomy. You reacted negatively when we mistakenly brought up sexual reproduction so we know there is a taboo of some nature in this particular area. Another concern is something we would wish to do if broaching this subject.'

"And that is?"

'We would like to touch you.'

Joyce frowned slightly and pushed herself up to her feet. "That doesn't seem like too big a thing to ask. Here." She stepped forward and reached towards one of Silver's leg with one hand. Instead of her hand coming to a halt like she was expecting her fingers pierced

through the swirling mists and came out the other side. Joyce's eyes widened in surprise. "What the hell?"

She moved her hand from side to side then up and down, but her hand didn't run into anything solid. No flesh, no bone, or anything else that could possibly be considered material. If anything, it felt like waving her hand in the wind or a very dense gas.

'Now you see part of the problem. We are not entirely corporeal beings, at least not any more. This shape you see in front of you is how our physical forms looked when we still had them. It is unnecessary, but we still assume this form when making contact with other species in order to seem less bizarre.'

"Wait, if you aren't solid then how were you planning to touch me?"

'We would need control over this dreamscape once again in order to show you.'

Once Joyce had handed control over Silver lowered its head to look down at the floor and a series of stone walls shimmered into existence. Formed into the shape of a rectangle the walls were about three feet long, a foot wide, and six inches high. Inside the box was some sort of scarlet loam. As Joyce looked at the plot, a spot in the middle began to stir and a slender tendril forced its way out and rose up into the air until it stood as tall as Joyce. The vine's turquoise skin looked like it was made of smooth leather and it tapered to a rounded point.

Joyce hesitantly began to back up and her voice quavered as she

spoke. "That looks like the vines the Mind Flayer made..."

Her memories of the times she had encountered those vines in the past flashed in front of her eyes. Will fixed to a wall with part of a slimy vine covering his mouth while more of it was shoved down his throat. Hopper trapped in an underground tunnel as tendrils wrapped around his neck and limbs pinned him to the ground. A wordless whimper came out as her back hit the wall.

'Please do not be alarmed Joyce.' The vine vanished into thin air without a trace and the soil was as undisturbed as it had been mere seconds ago. 'You are correct. That vine is the same type as the ones used by the Abomination.' Silver flashed red for an instant.

'As we mentioned earlier, we are not fully corporeal. However we needed a way to physically interact with our world so we created these vines for that purpose. They are not sentient and require one of our kind to control them. It is no different than whatever tools your species use to accomplish tasks.'

Silver looked back towards the forest outside again for a minute before turning back. 'If this request has caused you any distress then we apologize. If you do not wish to proceed with physical contact then we will drop the matter. Until next time Joyce.'

Without warning Joyce was back in her bed, her real house all around her. The illusion of her house was gone, but she could still see that vine nonetheless. Human anatomy and physical contact...

This was going to take a lot of thinking.

9. Chapter 9

'So what have you decided, Joyce?' asked Silver.

"I haven't made up my mind whether to do it or not yet." Joyce admitted. "How about we go over human anatomy first?"

'As you wish.'

Joyce picked up the large book resting on the arm of her armchair and flipped it open to one of the bookmarks she had put in it while still awake. "So this is an anatomy book from one of my son's. You'll have to be a sphere though so you can get close enough to see... wait I don't get this."

'What is it?'

"You told me that your race don't have actual bodies, Silver. I just realized that means you don't have eyes or ears or a nose. How can you hear what I'm saying or see anything? This doesn't make sense."

'What you are saying would be true in the real world. We do not have the same senses as most species since abandoning our physical bodies, but our telepathic abilities allow us to overcome that. However this place is a creation of the mind and so is everything in it. We could try to explain further, but that would distract us from what you have planned for this visit so let us simply say that we can see whatever it is you wish us to see.'

Joyce stared at Silver as he spoke then slowly shook her head. She had understood parts of that, but the rest was as illuminating as most of the other explanations Silver had given her. "Right, you can see. As I was saying, the pictures in this book aren't very big so you'll have to get closer to see them."

She turned the textbook around so that its pages were facing towards Silver as it shifted into a sphere and floated closer. On one page was a picture of a human skeleton standing with limbs stretched outwards and fingers spread apart. "So this is what human bones look like." Joyce said. After a moment she turned the page and pointed at another skeleton, this one covered in red and white. "And this is a skeleton with all our muscles and tendons attached."

Silver floated even closer before pulsing once. 'What are your bones and muscles made of?'

"Hang on..." Joyce turned the book back around and scanned the page until she found the paragraph she was looking for. "This says that bones are made out of collagen and calcium. Muscles are made of fibers which are made of protein."

She turned the page to her next bookmark and rotated the book back towards Silver. The picture on this page was a cutout of the human torso minus skin, bones, and muscles. Without those the only things remaining were the major organs that humans had. Joyce moved her finger from one to the next as she spoke. "So here is where all our organs are. Up here is the brain, that's our thinking part and where all our memories are stored. This one is the heart, it pumps blood through the body. These two here are the lungs, they pump air so we can breath. That's the liver, it uh, book says it breaks down fats by

making bile. These are the kidneys, those filter our blood to make urine which is stored in the bladder over here. Our stomach is full of acid which breaks down food and sends it to the intestines. The small intestine absorbs most of the food we eat and the large intestine absorbs water before sending the solid waste...”

Joyce's face reddened a bit and she rushed through the last part of that. “To the anus so we can get rid of it.” She coughed once and closed the book.

'Is that all of your organs? We do not see any backup systems or redundancy in this picture aside from the fact that you have two lungs and two kidneys.'

“No, we don't have any backups, Silver.”

'What happens if one of your organs fails or if they are damaged in some way?'

“Well there's organ transplants, but only for some of our organs. I've seen articles in the paper about lung and heart transplants so I know that's possible. A lung is possible, but just one. Kidneys too. The real problem is that most people don't live very long after an organ donation. It can give you a few years at best. At least, that's what the papers say.”

'The paper? Papers? We are unsure what you mean, Joyce.'

Joyce set the textbook aside and headed into the dining room before grabbing the day's newspaper off the table. "This is a newspaper. It's how we keep up with what's happening. We have a section for local news, national news here, and this one is global."

'Printed media. Is this your only source of news or do you have other formats?'

"We have television," Joyce pointed at the set behind Silver. "and radio, but that's it."

'Very well. We would like to discuss this further at a later time, but we are straying from our chosen topic.'

Joyce closed her eyes and took a deep breath as she set the text book aside. "So let me ask you a question. Why do you want to touch me, Silver?"

'Physical contact is part of how we learn about the anatomy of other races. You are lovely to look at, but appearance is only part of what we wish to learn. What does your skin or hair feel like? How strong are your muscles? How sensitive is your nervous system? Assuming you have one.'

A slight reddish tinge appeared on her cheeks as Silver spoke and Joyce swallowed nervously. "Lovely? You think I'm lovely?"

'We think so. We have contacted many different species and they vary

a great deal in appearance. Some are pleasant to look upon, but others are... less so. We admit that our contact with humans is limited to a very small group of individuals, but that doesn't change the fact we consider you pleasant to behold.'

The aliens visiting her dreams thought she was attractive. Joyce shivered and took another deep breath. "Okay, I'll let you touch me, but we're doing this my way. I make the rules and you follow them. If you don't then I won't cooperate with you anymore."

It was hardly the most menacing of threats, but it was the best she could do. She didn't know how to force them to stop visiting her dreams or if doing so was even possible for that matter. Joyce couldn't exactly file a restraining order on a telepathic alien race, and there wasn't anything Hopper could do to help her out with this. She could try shooting at them, but the Investigators had shown a level of proficiency at manipulating the dreamscape far above her own. Non-cooperation wasn't just the best she could do. In fact it was the *only* card she had to play.

'That is acceptable to us, Joyce. How do you wish to proceed?'

"These areas are off limits." Joyce drew a circle in the air around her breasts and another around her pelvis. "You don't get to touch me in these areas or anywhere on my face and neck."

'As you wish.'

The square box of red soil from last time shimmered into existence between the two of them and soon after a turquoise tendril was

emerging from it. Joyce stood up from her chair then took a few steps forward until she was standing at the edge of the vine's enclosure. Her right hand rose upwards from her side then forwards until her arm was fully extended. The vine bent in the middle as it sinuously curved towards her outstretched hand. It paused an inch away from the tip of her index finger before closing the distance and pressing itself against the whorls of said finger.

Joyce shivered as Silver's creation made contact, but she ignored the impulse to jerk her hand away. Instead she kept still and waited for the vine's next move. After a few seconds it slid forward and down between her index and middle finger. Its skin felt almost like smooth leather and it was surprisingly warm. Not hot enough to be uncomfortable, but enough that she could tell exactly where the tendril was touching her just by the heat it was radiating. The vine rubbed its side against the knuckles of her index finger before weaving itself in-between each of her other fingers and giving them an extremely light squeeze.

“What are you doing?”

'This is our first time touching a human. You are inherently familiar with how various parts of your body feel and we are not.'

The tendril slipped away from her fingers and it snaked around her wrist. It didn't stop there, instead opting to loop itself around her arm all the way up to the top of her shoulder. The thing squeezed each of its coils to feel the muscles underneath before shifting each loop downwards an inch and doing it again. Then the tentacle's tip descended from her shoulder and curved up into the pit of Joyce's arm, poking at the flesh beneath through the fabric of tee shirt. Suddenly giggles filled the air and Joyce began to squirm away from the box.

Immediately the tentacle let go of her arm and shot straight up into the air and wisps of orange began to appear among Silver's mists. 'Did we hurt you? We meant no harm. Please forgive us.'

It took Joyce a moment to stop giggling and compose herself. She cleared her throat before opening her mouth. "No, you didn't hurt me. That's called giggling. My armpits are really ticklish so I couldn't help it. I should have told you, but it didn't occur to me that you would go there."

The orange wisps vanished.

'Curious. We have encountered similar reactions in other species, but never one so strong as this. How do humans perceive tickling? Is it seen as a pleasurable activity?'

"It varies I guess? It can be fun if people who are close do it to each other. Tickling can be mean too if the person doing it won't stop. Bullies can make people pee themselves if they really want to."

'Close to each other? Doesn't tickling require close proximity in order to accomplish it?'

Joyce shook her head. "No, like emotionally close to each other. I wouldn't go up to a total stranger and start tickling them. That would be really weird."

'We see. Well, we are not total strangers so...'

The tendril bent downwards and slowly advanced towards Joyce, as if on the prowl.

“Don't you dare!”

Despite her admonishment she didn't move away, instead trying to grab the vine with her hands. It adroitly dipped beneath her grasping fingers and dove inwards to the area Joyce had identified as ticklish. High pitched giggles burst free from Joyce again as she grabbed the vine and pulled it away. Undeterred it switched targets and went for her other armpit. Joyce let go of the vine and pulled her elbows inwards against her rib cage in order to deny it access. The tentacle floated back and forth from side to side, occasionally shooting in only to be thwarted as Joyce turned away. A second vine sprouted from the red soil and it was quick to join the action. The newcomer snared her wrist and it pulled with a slowly increasing force until there was enough space for its compatriot to wiggle its way into Joyce's armpit.

“No... fair! That's... cheating!” Joyce shrieked between bouts of giggles as she tried to squirm away.

'We are not cheaters. This is the very definition of fair play. You have two limbs with which to work and now we have two vines.' Despite Silver's words the vines withdrew from Joyce's figure.

She took a deep breath and brushed a stray lock of hair off her face and audibly exhaled. “So, now what?”

'We would like to continue this visit, but something has arisen that requires our collective's attention unfortunately. Would you be willing to let us proceed with examining you during our next visit?'

Joyce pursed her lips and looked up at the ceiling before answering. "I can agree to that except you have to promise not to tickle me again unless I ask you to."

'That is acceptable. Until next time, Joyce.'

Once she was back in her bed Joyce's chest slowly rose then fell as she exhaled. All of that had just been in her mind and yet she still felt like giggling after the fact.

10. Chapter 10

“So is there anything you want to talk about or do you just want skip it and touch me again?” Joyce asked.

'We would like to ask about how the human education system works before we resume physical contact.'

“Education?” Joyce rubbed at her chin as she considered the sheer breadth of what Silver's request encompassed. “That's a tricky one.”

'How so?'

“Well, you know humans live in a bunch of different countries and each country has their own education system. Some put a lot of money into their schools so they have better schools and a lot of countries... well they don't have money for that.”

'Income disparities. We see. Did you attend school in your country, Joyce?' She nodded and Silver went on. 'Then tell us what you know of education in the USA.'

“Okay... well there's two types of schools in the US. Public and private. Public schools get their funding from taxes while private schools get their money from donations and charging tuition fees.”

'How do students choose between public or private schools?'

“Well, the parents typically choose the school that their kids go to when they're younger. There's a bunch of things that go into it. The school's reputation, the neighborhoods around it, the teachers and other stuff.”

'What things did you consider when choosing a school for your sons?'

Joyce grimaced, knowing this was going to sound bad. “Well there's only one school district in Hawkins so it wasn't exactly a choice I had to make.”

'Do students ever get to choose where they receive their education or is it solely the parent's decision?'

She bit her lip before shaking her head. “Here, let me start over. Americans typically start going to kindergarten for a year when they're five years old. Then they go to elementary school for four years, middle school for four years, and high school for four years. After that they can choose to go to a college of their choice which is another four years. Most people stop there, but there's graduate programs that people can also take.”

'Why do you have so many periods of four year blocks?'

Joyce shrugged with her palms facing upwards. “Don't know. I suppose there's a reason for it, but I have no idea what it might be.”

'Very well. What kind of things do you study while in school?'

"Well, there's a set curriculum when you're in elementary and middle school. Mathematics, English, history, science, health classes and physical education. Once you get to high school you can start choosing what subjects you want to take. There's harder classes in high school too. Like Calculus or AP classes. If you go to college then you can pick the major you want to study."

'How does one choose a college? What criteria goes into making that decision?'

"It varies from person to person I guess. Location of the school is a big one. Some people want to stay close to where they grew up, others want to get away. How much the tuition costs is important. What departments the school is known for. People wanting to do engineering or some kind of science degree will favor certain schools while someone who wants to be a lawyer might go somewhere else. There's also grades to consider. Some schools are really picky about who they accept as students while others don't care that much."

'We see. There is something else we would like to ask you about now. What kind of number system do you use?'

"Uhh... number system?" Joyce scratched at the side of her head. "What do you mean?"

'The amount of numbers you use on a regular basis. If you were to start counting, where would you begin?'

Joyce frowned, not quite understanding what he was asking, but counting was easy. She started rattling numbers off while extending her fingers purely out of habit. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten."

'Base ten. It seems that particular tendency continues to remain true.'

"What tendency?"

'We have found that species choose a number system based upon physical traits they possess. The fact your species have ten digits is reflected in your choice of decimal. Speaking of physical traits, we would like to move on from education to physical contact once more.'

"Sure, go ahead." Joyce extended the arm that Silver had been touching last time. "No tickling though."

'That is not quite what we wanted to do this time. We examined your arms last time so we are interested in a different part of you now.' Silver took a step forward and one of its front limbs gestured towards her jeans. 'However, we are unsure if you would be willing to cooperate with us on this occasion. The fact you wear clothing implies some sort of modesty standards and one of the areas you said was off limits is covered by the same article as the rest of your legs.'

Joyce looked down at the blue jeans before shrugging. "I'll just go change into a pair of shorts. Give me a minute."

She turned away and headed down the hall towards her bedroom. She closed the door behind her before slipping out of her shoes without untying their laces. It wasn't the responsible thing to do, but since none of this was real why bother? Joyce unbuttoned and pushed them to the ground then headed to a nearby dresser and grabbing a pair of blue denim cutoffs from one of its drawers. They didn't really match her brown and green striped shirt, but that wasn't the point. Joyce slid them on with a mumbled curse that they were tighter than she remembered.

Silver was already prepared and waiting for her in the living room. The plot of red soil was sitting on the floor and two tendrils an inch in diameter were sticking out of it. Joyce stopped in front of the plot and looked over at Silver. "How do you want to do this?"

'We think it would be easiest if you were sitting on the floor. That will ensure your muscles are at ease while still providing us the room we need.'

Joyce took a step back and eased herself down so that she was sitting with her knees bent in front of her. "Like this?"

The tentacles bent downwards and they tucked themselves into the cuffs of her socks, carefully eased them off her feet. Then they wrapped themselves around her shins and gently pulled until her hair covered legs were almost fully extended and her heels were resting on the red loam. 'Are you ready to begin, Joyce?' Silver asked.

"Go ahead."

As she watched both of the tentacles actually began to diminish in size until their girth was only a fourth of an inch or so. Once they had finished shrinking they let go of Joyce's shins and moved down towards her toes. 'Are you ticklish here?'

"I used to be, but not anymore. Now it's just my arm pits." Joyce said.

Her feet may not have been ticklish anymore, but that didn't mean they weren't still sensitive and she could quite distinctly feel every bit of those vines as they moved. The warm tendrils slid downwards through the gap between her big and index toes before weaving its way upwards through the next gap until all of them were filled on both feet. The tips came back around and lightly brushed themselves against her toenails while the lengths woven through her digits squeezed and rubbed against her knuckles.

Once content with what they had found both tendrils untangled themselves and grew in size until they were as thick as they formerly been. They glided along the bridge of her foot towards the ankle then back towards her toes before switching to her soles. Each vine caressed the ball of her feet for a moment then moved on to her arches. They pressed upwards with a mild pressure and Joyce's feet fidgeted in response. Right away the tentacles stopped what they were doing and Silver's voice came through. 'Are you all right? We didn't hurt you did we?'

"No, that didn't hurt. That actually felt good." Joyce reluctantly admitted. "I just wasn't expecting you to start massaging my feet like that."

A moment passed as the two of them looked at each other and then a second pair of tentacles emerged from the soil. This pair reached past the other two as they headed for her calves, but stopped just shy of making contact. 'Would this be acceptable, Joyce?'

"Go ahead."

The vines closed the remaining distance, the actions of each tendril mirroring the other as they meticulously began their exploration of her figure. First they stroked along the bone in the front of her shin then curved around to the bottom and pressed against the muscles there. Then they moved upwards an inch and did it again, clearly intent on examining as much of her as they could before they ran out of space by hitting her cutoffs. At the same time the first pair of vines were pressing ever so lightly into the arches of both of her feet as they drew misshapen spirals. They would start near the heel of each foot and gradually circle inwards to the very middle then reverse themselves until they were back where they had started. As the vines finally made their way onto Joyce's thighs a soft sigh bearing traces of carnal origin entered the room.

At once all four tentacles froze in the middle of what they were doing before retreating back the plot. Silver lifted its head from legs to their owners face. 'Are you all right?'

The woman's face flushed crimson and she clapped one hand over her mouth while shaking her head. She had just... She couldn't stay here. She had to leave, to get out of this place. Now. Anywhere was better than here.

Joyce shot upright to a sitting position in the darkness of her bedroom. She was alone now, but Joyce's cheeks continued to burn

as if the creature's presence was lingering. Joyce grabbed her blanket and sheet, tossing them to the side and looking down at herself. The vines were obviously no longer there, but she could still feel them touching her feet, crawling up her legs.

What was worse was that she didn't know how to feel about that fact.

11. Chapter 11

Joyce was sitting at the table in her dining room, a mug of untouched coffee that had long since gone cold in her hands. The blinds on the window directly in front of her had been raised and she could see parts of the forest that surrounded her house through it.

The clock in the kitchen had hands pointing at ten and five. On most days she would be at work, but Joyce had burned one of her sick days even though she was fine. She could have gone in, but she was far too distracted at the moment to focus on anything other than the problem currently troubling her.

She had moaned.

November 6th, 1983. The date was burned into her memories as the day when Pandora's Box had been opened and the bizarre had forced itself into her life. A grotesque and faceless monster, a child with the power to move things with her mind, some sort of parallel dimension that her youngest son had been taken to by aforementioned monster, secretive government experiments, it went on and on.

The bizarre hadn't even been content to leave itself in the waking world as she had started being visited by an alien race while asleep. At first it had been as unusual as everything else, but said aliens had been patient and willing to allay her concerns so there hadn't been any real issues until now. She had moaned.

Joyce's eyes lowered towards the table where a thermometer lay. The red line stopped at the same number as every other time Johnathan had taken her temperature. Ninety-eight point six.

After 'Will' had been fished out of the quarry everyone had believed him dead. Everyone except Joyce that was, a belief she had been alone in. She had endured the isolation and all the criticism from other people because she knew she had been right. Now once again, she found herself isolated, but this time it was self imposed.

She had allies on her side now, people who would and had expressed a willingness to help her with the aliens visiting her dreams. But was she supposed to bring this particular dilemma up with them? That she had moaned. That the alien's actions had turned her on. Not humans, aliens. The aliens hadn't even touched her directly themselves for that matter. All of the actual touching had been done by whatever those things were called. Were they the vines or tendrils of a plant or were they some kind of tentacles? No, she couldn't bring this up with the others.

Joyce had been sitting at this table for hours, since before her sons had left for school. She had been looking at this thorny problem of hers from every angle she conceive of and they all led to the same place. If she was going to find a solution or someone to talk to then there was only one place where she could do it and one person, or persons in this case, that she could do it with.

She turned her head away from the window and looked down the hall towards her bedroom. It was still early in the day and the time for sleeping was nearly twelve hours away. Joyce raised the mug to her lips and finally took a drink. She had until then to figure out what the hell she was going to say.

Silver had been waiting in the living for Joyce the last couple of visits, but not this time. Instead she found the alien standing outside in front of her house. The same place it had been as the first time she had seen it.

Joyce looked around for a moment before folding her arms across her chest. “So we're out here again, huh?”

'Perhaps it is something of an overreaction, but since we are unsure of what went wrong during our last visit we feel this is the right decision.'

“Unsure? *Unsure?*” Joyce laughed and shook her head. “I would've thought it pretty obvious what happened.”

'Perhaps it may seem that way to you, but we are genuinely at a loss. From our perspective it seemed things were progressing well then it seemed as if you were... running away for whatever reason.'

Joyce frowned as she slowly unfolded her arms. “You must be joking. You had to have heard the sound I made. How does that not make it obvious?”

Silver's head turned towards the forest for a moment before it responded. 'We mean no offense, but you have made a mistake here though we are also partly to blame. One of the difficulties in encountering new species is learning their mannerisms. Their facial expressions, the way they speak, their body language, and so on. You have to remember that you are the only human with whom we have spoken and we are still trying to learn your mannerisms. For example

shaking your head from side to side seems to have negative connotations or you move the corners of your mouth up and down to indicate pleasure or displeasure. There was also that time you explained that applause is a gesture meaning approval.'

"So you're saying that-"

'We do not understand what the sound you made at the end of our last visit meant. That is also true for any non-verbal sound you make as well. One of our biggest concerns when it came to physical interaction was using too much pressure or doing that something that might hurt you and not realize it because we don't know the vocalizations humans use to express pain.'

Joyce's shoulders slumped and she let out a sigh as Silver's words sank in. Everything she had come up with that day, the lines she had rehearsed had all hinged on the assumption that Silver had understood what had transpired at the end of their last visit. "No, Silver, you didn't hurt me, the exact opposite really, and that's what makes this so weird."

'We are still unsure what you mean. If we did not hurt you then what did we do?'

"I..." Joyce's face burned red and she took a deep breath before blurting it out. "I got turned on."

'Turned on? We are not quite sure what you mean by that.'

“Oh god damn it.” Joyce threw her arms up in the air in frustration.
“Like aroused. Horny.”

Silver pulsed brighter and it turned its head to look at the forest. After a long moment Silver returned its attention to Joyce. 'To be clear, you are troubled by the fact you were aroused?'

“What the hell do you think I've been trying to say?” Joyce demanded.

'We are merely trying to ensure we understand the source of your discomfort. May we ask what exactly bothers you so much about this?'

“It's... this whole thing is freaking me out. You're an alien. An alien without a real body so you need those plant vine tendril things to touch me and I got turned on by whatever those are supposed to be.”

'Is that unusual? We don't wish to sound like we're just relying on the same excuse over and over, but our lack of knowledge extends to your sexuality in particular and human sexuality in general.'

“For me it is! I've never been attracted to anything but men and now... now I just got turned on by something that isn't even human.”

'Perhaps this may not help you, but your response during our last visit isn't out of the ordinary. Your race is still in the earliest days of exploring the planes of existence so you don't have experience in

these matters. It isn't uncommon for beings to interact, so to speak, with beings of other races with which they are compatible.'

"I don't care about other races. I'm talking about me." Joyce pointed out. "Don't you get that I'm weirded out by what happened?"

'When we began visiting your dreams it was with the intention of learning about your species. However the process of learning is never one-sided. In the process those we contact learn things about us as well. However in this instance you have learned something about yourself even if you don't care for it. We do not wish to give offense, but our kind has always valued candor above all else. The fact of the matter is that you were aroused by the touch of our tentacles. You may not enjoy that fact at the moment, but that response is a part of who you are. Accept it, ignore it, deny it... however you choose to deal with this response is your decision.'

Joyce's shoulders visibly slumped as Silver's words sank in. "You're not very much help you know that right?"

'We apologize again, but we are not sure what you were hoping for from us.'

"I guess I was just hoping you'd tell that I'm not a freak or something..." Joyce muttered.

'For what? Being aroused by tentacles?' Silver almost sounded amused, a rare break from its usual pleasant sounding monotone. 'Joyce, we have encountered a vast number of races and entities during our explorations of various planes. As a result we have seen

all manners of methods of sexual reproductions. Some are pleasant, others benign, but there are some that cannot be described as anything other than horrific. We will not go into details, but believe us when we say that your response to our tentacles is nowhere even close to the worst we have seen. You are not a freak.'

"Have... have you ever had someone respond to your... tentacles the same way I did?" Joyce asked, not sure if she wanted the answer to be yes or no.

'That has happened on multiple occasions, yes, with a wide range of reactions. Some were quite angry at themselves and adamantly against the idea. A few who responded negatively at first ended up changing their minds and joined with the others who were amenable, enthusiastically so in some cases.'

"So you're saying that..." Joyce's voice trailed off and she swallowed nervously. "...people, what, have used those tentacles for sex?"

'That is an accurate summation. It is a request we have agreed to in the past and if that is your desire, then it is a request we would oblige for you as well.'

"Uhhh..." Joyce took a step backwards while looking down at the ground and rubbing her neck. She had come here to find solace or some kind of reassurance and Silver *had* given her that. Then almost immediately afterwards Silver had made an offer she really, *really* hadn't been expecting. The sheer suddenness, and temerity, was enough to make her freeze up and Joyce's instincts honed from years of working retail kicked in. "That's nice of you to offer, but I think I'll pass. Maybe next time."

A moment and then another before what exactly she had just said dawned on her. Joyce groaned and covered her face with her hands.

Time to leave.

12. Chapter 12

“So how are things going with the aliens, Mom? You haven't talked about it all which is kinda weird. I figure being the first person to speak with an alien race would *kinda* be really exciting.” Johnathan remarked.

Joyce very nearly inhaled her coffee down the wrong pipe and she doubled over in a fit of coughs while holding her chest. Johnathan dropped his spoon to the table and abandoned his bowl of cereal as he headed over to his mom's side. Joyce waved him off, but he only retreated a short distance and was still almost hovering over her.

There was no way he could have known the full meaning of what he had just said, but even so the double entendre was far from being lost on her. The last few visits... that was something she could never, *ever* discuss with her son or anyone else for that matter. As for the rest of what Johnathan had said, that was definitely true. Talking to Hopper and Johnathan about the possibility of things going wrong, that she had watched a game of basketball and asking her son to record songs for her.

“Well, it's basically just them asking a bunch of questions and me trying to answer them.” Joyce said.

Johnathan moved away from her and sat down in his chair. “About what?”

Joyce shrugged her shoulders and took a drink. “Economics, politics, I even showed them some diagrams of where human organs are. It doesn't seem to matter what we talk about though. They just want to

learn anything they can about humans.”

“Why?” Johnathan asked, a bewildered look on his face. “What do they get out of learning about us?”

“This is going to sound dumb, but I think learning about other species is how they deal with boredom.” Joyce explained. “From what they've told me their whole race is telepathically connected to each other. It's like they know what all of them are thinking or feeling all the time and they don't have any secrets from each other. I'm not sure they even think of themselves as individuals anymore. The one I'm talking to never says I. It's always we and us and our.”

“How long do you think they're going to keep visiting you? Sooner or later you're going to run out of stuff to talk about right?”

Joyce opened then closed her mouth before eventually responding. “I don't know... we've never talked about it. I'll bring it up tonight.”

“What do you think they'll ask about this time?”

“Don't know that either.” There was one possibility, but it was one she would never say out loud. At least not in the real world.

“Right... well good luck tonight, mom.”

Silver was waiting outside her house once again. Joyce slowly made her way off the porch as she waited for the alien to say something. 'So about the end of our last visit-'

Joyce shook her head as she cut Silver off. "I don't want to talk about that. What I said was a slip of the tongue, and I didn't really mean it. Do you have something you want to talk about this visit?"

'Very well. We would like to see some of the tools that humans use to accomplish various tasks.'

"You want to see tools? Okay, come on then." Joyce turned and began walking across the lawn as she made her way to the side of her house then turned again. She glanced over her shoulder to see Silver slowly following her in silence, each of its stride covering as much ground as two of hers.

Behind her house was the shed where her landscaping and most of her house tools were stored. Off to one side of the rustic wooden building was a riding lawn mower that had seen better days. Joyce had been heading for the shed's door, but Silver continued moving and stopped near the lawn mower.

'What is this?' Silver's head lowered towards the ground as it examined the machine.

"That's my lawn mower. It's how I cut the grass." Joyce waved aimlessly at the short green blades all around them that comprised

her lawn.

'May we view the engine?' Silver asked while looking at the machine's upper area.

Joyce grabbed a hold of the metal covering and tugged up on it once then again before it reluctantly opened with a squeal. "Are you kidding me? This is all in my head, and this piece of crap still gives me a hard time. There, that's the engine."

Silver leaned in closer as it inspected the blocky apparatus of metal, plastic and tubes joined together. 'What is this powered by?'

"Gas."

'Gas?' Silver looked at her for a moment then turned its attention back to the mower. As Joyce watched, some of the mist from Silver's leg detached itself and flew towards the motor, disappearing into whatever nooks and crannies it find. After a few seconds the mist re-appeared and returned back to Silver's limb. 'We understand now. A combustion engine powered by -' Here Silver hesitated for an instant before continuing to speak. '-gas, much like the car out front. Do you have more tools inside, Joyce?'

"Yeah, that's where I keep pretty much everything. Come on."

Joyce opened the door and turned the lightbulb on before stepping further inside. Behind her, Silver's limbs were retracting into itself as

it shrank into its spherical form before entering. A counter ran along one wall and various items were strewn all about, having been set down wherever it was most convenient when they had last been used. Joyce raised one hand as she started pointing at various implements in the shed.

“That's a hacksaw, used to cut metal. This is a caulking gun, caulk is a sealant you use to fill up holes or cracks. That's a rake, we use those when leaves fall off the trees.” She picked up a flashlight and flicked it on. “Flashlight so we can see in the dark. There's some rope to tie stuff up with.” Joyce pulled a screwdriver from its rack and opened up a small box of screws beneath it. “Screwdriver's are used to turn screws which fastens things together. Wrench over there kinda does the same thing, but in a different way.”

She put the screwdriver away and turned to face Silver. “Is this really interesting? I don't know how many races you've encountered, but you had to have seen stuff like this a bunch of times before. I mean, it's a screwdriver. How interesting can that be?”

'You make a valid point. The tools on your plane tend to not be dissimilar in terms of function, but they vary a great deal in appearance due to the requirements of being usable by their creators. To answer your question however, our interest is seeing the differences between races in the design of their implements. We have found the design of their tools is indicative of that species mentality and thought processes.'

“Oh? Well, what do my tools say about humans?”

'From what we see here, you seem a practical minded people. Your tools appear to have purposefully ignored aesthetics in favor of

functionality. The tools are made from a variety of materials and show some competence in various sciences, but at the cost of actual advancement.'

"You don't think we're advanced?" Disbelief and a tangible hint of anger was woven through Joyce's voice at the notion. "Astronauts have walked on the moon and we've sent satellites to other planets. I don't have any at home, but I could find pictures Voyager took of Saturn and Jupiter at the library."

"Travel through outer space. We do not mean to belittle your species, but you have much to learn and far to go. However this is a discussion for another time. Are all your tools in here or do you have more elsewhere?"

"There's some in the kitchen that I use for cooking if you're interested in those."

'Culinary. Yes, we would be interested in that.'

"All right, come on inside then."

Once in the kitchen Joyce started opening cupboards and pulling some of their contents out. Once satisfied she gestured towards a white appliance standing near the corner of the room. "The centerpiece of any person's kitchen is the stove. There's four burners on top that heat up to cook food."

Joyce pointed at some of the items she had neatly lined up on the counter. "Over here are some of the things you put on the burners. The tall one is a stock pot that I use for soups. The one next to it is a smaller pot if I'm not making as much stuff. That's a cast iron skillet and that's a non-stick skillet. Basically you use those to fry stuff. This thing is a sauce pan and I use it to make, well, sauces or gravy."

Next she opened the stove's door and pointed at the inside. "There's a couple of things in here you should take a look at it. Up there on the top is the broiler. We use that to heat the top side of food really quickly then flip it over and cook the other side." Joyce switched from pointing at the top to the bottom where a curving metal rod was located. "That's the main heating element of the stove and what we typically use. This rack can be moved up or down if we want it closer or further away from the heat. Over there are the things we put in the oven. Cookie sheet, roasting pan, muffin pan, cake pan, loaf pan, and that's a lasagna pan."

Lastly she pulled open a couple of drawers and gestured at the mess of items in them. "We use the stuff in the silverware drawer to eat. Butter knives, spoons, and forks." Joyce started picking items up from the other drawer and rattled their name off before putting it back and grabbing the next. "Tongs, spatula, whisk, fork thing we use for spaghetti, ladle, ladle with holes, ice cream scoop, measuring spoons, and these are measuring cups."

After Joyce returned the cups to the drawer she turned towards Silver. "Any other tools you want to see?"

'No, we are content with what you have shown us for now. We would like to try and understand what happened at the end of our previous visit.'

Joyce's eyes drew together as she scowled at Silver. "I said I didn't want to talk about all of that. Bringing it up again is rude."

'It is? That may be true of human customs, but not of ours. We are not given to avoiding topics or keeping secrets. It is our belief that those practices only allow things to fester and become problematic later on.'

"Well, I was really weirded out by getting turned on which I explained to you. You were starting to make me feel better about it, but then you offered to... to..." Joyce swallowed before forcing the rest of her sentence out. "...have sex with me. "I was confused about the whole thing already, but that pushed it to another level. I had no clue what to say so I reverted into retail mode and what I said just came out on its own."

'Retail mode?'

"I work at a general store. Part of my job is to help customers which means I always have to be polite no matter what. After a while you learn how to go into auto pilot when people start getting angry and yell at you."

'Ah, so it seems that we misunderstood. Thank you for explaining the matter.'

"Misunderstood?" Joyce blinked once before it dawned on her. "Oh! You thought I..."

They had thought she was interested in having sex with tentacles. It was the second time in as many visits that the subject had come up, but now *she* was the one giving voice to it. Yet somehow the idea didn't seem as ludicrous as it had during their previous visit. Joyce rubbed at one warm cheek and she could feel the same heat that the tentacles had previously caused beginning to rise again. She closed her eyes and thrust the dreamscape away.

Once back in her bed Joyce stared at the ceiling, the need for sleep nowhere to be found. She had a decision to make.

13. Chapter 13

'It occurs to us that you are starting to make a habit of abrupt departures from our visits. We are beginning to wonder if we are unknowingly giving offense.'

Silver was floating a few feet away from Joyce who was sitting on one of the chairs in front of her house, hands folded in her lap.

Joyce had never been the most confident of people. As a little girl she had always been unsure of herself. That unease hadn't gone away as she got older, her anxiety had only gotten worse. A general cloud that had loomed over everything in school over the years Making friends had been nerve-wracking. Trying to keep up with all the homework had practically been a Sisyphean effort for her. Every test she had taken in school had been incrementally worse than the ones preceding it. It hadn't been easy, but she had managed.

Psyching herself up to sleep with Lonnie for the first time had taken hours, and it had gone less than smoothly. Two people who didn't know what they were doing awkwardly fumbling around in the backseat of a car that was too small for the both of them. Joyce had been dry the entire time and she ached for days after the attempt. Their second was barely any better. Neither of them had been willing to give up, and the pain slowly went away though Lonnie had never really satisfied her as a lover. Then Joyce's period failed to show up when she was expecting it. A week passed before she went to the store for a test.

That was when her anxiety had really started to become an issue. Their first child hadn't been planned. Neither of them had been expecting Johnathan as such they hadn't prepared for him. There

hadn't been much money in the bank, they had just taken out a loan on a home, and the two of them hadn't ever discussed having children. In addition there was all the things she had to look forward to. Morning sickness, hormones going wild, randomly craving all manners food for no reason, *growing another person inside of her*. After nine months of all that she had the best part to look forward to. Physically pushing said person out of her body and into the real world, the worst pain a woman could reasonably expect in life. Then there was all the crying, the sleepless nights, and endless fussing as she tried to care for a minuscule infant that somehow could produce an infinite quantity of puke and feces.

It wouldn't have been so bad if she could have taken medication for it, but she had a certain condition called being pregnant. And if that wasn't enough she went through it all over again four years later. That had been when her marriage had started to deteriorate. Lonnie had never been able to keep a steady income, and Joyce had started working at Melvald's to make ends meet two years after Johnathan had been born. So getting pregnant with Will had only served to stretch them even further. She and Lonnie had managed to stagger along for several more years, but eventually they filed for divorce. Lonnie had wanted no part of her children and suddenly Joyce was struggling to raise two boys as a single mother.

Things had been bad, but she had continued to cope. At least until the night Will had disappeared and the events that had followed it that as well as their continuation last November. After a month had passed these visits had begun, and now she found herself sitting here in front of an alien creature that had described her as lovely and even gone so far as offering sex. With tentacles.

If she had written down a list of things she had thought might happen to her, this would *never* have been on it. Until these last few visits Joyce couldn't have ever imagined something like this even existed. She had had a realization the previous night as she had

mulled the issue over. Joyce was uneasy about this whole situation. There was no denying that, but it taken an hour before she had realized something.

She wasn't anxious because she thought the notion of spreading her legs for these tentacles repulsive. She was anxious because of the things she didn't know.

“No, you haven't offended me, Silver.” Joyce smiled a bit as she said it. “This whole sex thing keeps catching me off guard so I get flustered and leave. I've thought it through so I know where I stand now. I have a question for you. How much longer are you going to visit me for? I meant to ask you last time, but I got sidetracked.”

'That is a somewhat difficult question to answer since it doesn't entirely depend on us. The amount of time we spending contacting new races can vary a great deal, but in general the person we contact is the one who decides.'

“So it's up to me?” Joyce asked.

'Yes. We may be the ones creating this connection, but we have no desire to intrude where we are not wanted. Sometimes they lose interest in answering our questions or perhaps they do not wish to be the one that we contact.'

“Okay. I have another question. Is this place dangerous at all?” Joyce looked past Silver to the blurry trees surrounding them. “Can I get hurt or sick from something that happens here?”

'Dreamscapes can be altered a great deal, but only if the person in control is adept. That person is you in this case. We create the connection, but everything around us comes from you. Whether anything that happens here affects us outside the dreamscape is your decision. If you decide that it won't, then it won't. If you decide that it will, then it will.'

Joyce chewed on her lip as she considered that. "Okay, but what about the me that's here? Would I feel pain if something happened here? Even if it wouldn't affect my real body."

'It is possible to make it so you don't feel pain, but you lack the aptitude with dreamscapes to make that happen. We could train you, but that would take many hours at best. We are capable of such a feat, but we are not familiar enough with the human body to do it for you.'

So that was that. Nothing she did here would affect her in the real world. She couldn't get injured, she couldn't get sick, but she could feel pain. She could also feel pleasure. Joyce took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

They had been dancing around this subject for the last few visits, but now she could see two paths in front of her. She could tell them to leave, to never return and her life would go back to normal, or as normal as it could be given recent events. The other path was of a decidedly more lewd nature. She could always say no to the aliens. To not go through with it. Joyce already knew that wasn't going to happen though. If these visits continued then it would only be a matter of time.

Joyce opened her eyes and stood up. She walked to her front door and opened it before turning towards Silver. "All right, let's go inside."

The alien floated past her into the house and after a moment Joyce followed it in, only pausing long enough to shut the door behind her. There was no one besides her and Silver here, but she still didn't feel comfortable doing this outside. Joyce stepped out of her shoes then reached down to pull her socks off. A moment later her pants joined them on the floor followed shortly by her shirt, leaving her clad only in a white bra and boy-shorts that had both begun to fade.

Silver drifted closer towards her before speaking. 'Is this a way of saying that you accept the offer we made?'

"More or less. We'll get there eventually, but I'm not ready yet. For now I want you to start getting familiar with my body." Joyce sank downwards until her butt was sitting on the floor with legs stretched out in front of her.

The plot of dirt appeared in front of Joyce and four tentacles emerged from the soil. Each made their way to a different limb as they split apart. They ignored her hands and feet this time, instead coiling around her ankles and wrists then making their way up higher and higher. Joyce put her hands down by the hem of her underwear to block the tentacles from going any further. "That's still off-limits. I want you to squeeze one of my wrists. Lightly at first, but I want you to keep squeezing harder until I tell you to stop. That way you'll have some idea of what it takes to hurt me."

The tentacle wrapped around her right wrist began to squeeze like she had instructed. There was hardly any pressure about the

beginning and Silver was almost painstakingly slow in turning the pressure up. Eventually though Joyce began to wince so she shook her head. “Stop.”

The tentacle let go at once. 'Are you all right, Joyce?'

“I'm fine. So did that help you at all?” Joyce asked.

'We believe so, yes. We remember how much pressure we used on your feet so now we have a better idea of how to please you.'

Joyce giggled at that and wiggled her fingers at the metallic orb. “Well why don't you put your money where... uhhh how about you show me then?”

As the tentacles began to re-position themselves Joyce laid her back down on the floor. There was still a ways to go, but she was committed now.

14. Chapter 14

“Before we get started I have a question for you, Silver.”

'What do you wish to know?'

Joyce wrapped her fingers around one of the appendages sticking out of the plot of dirt, the tentacle's smooth surface warm as usual against her skin. It twitched at her touch before curling around the back of her hand. “How much can these things feel?”

'We are not sure what you mean.' The silver sphere replied.

“Well none of you have bodies so you only feel what these tentacles feel. I want to know if they can feel pleasure.” Joyce explained as she brushed her thumb against the skin of the tentacle.

'You are wondering if there is a way to reciprocate during intercourse. We appreciate the sentiment, but the occasions where such that trait would be applicable are infrequent. As such, we have always deemed it not worth the effort. May we ask what motivates this particular desire of yours?'

“Well... when we do this you're going to be pleasuring me.” Joyce's cheeks colored at the thought of what that entailed as she continued speaking. “I don't want to be selfish though. You should be getting something out of this too... Wait I have an idea. Could we do a mind meld like Spock does on Star Trek?”

'You will have to explain this to us. We think we know what you mean, but we are as unfamiliar with Star Trek as the first time you mentioned it.'

"It's a thing Spock did on the show. He could join his mind together with another person's to read their thoughts and stuff. If we did a mind meld then you'd be able to feel everything I do or think."

'What you ask is possible, but joining your thoughts to ours is impossible. Your time in what you call the Upside Down made you sensitive enough for us to contact you. However you are not telepathic, and you lack the mental discipline necessary for such an endeavor. If we were to do as you suggest then you would be rendered catatonic at best from the sheer quantity of thoughts you would be exposed to.'

Silver's voice trailed off for a few moments before returning. 'There is a possibility however. It is possible for us to set up a sort of connection where you would not receive anything from us, but we would receive from you. That would allow us to share your thoughts and sensations without you being harmed. Would this be acceptable?'

Joyce looked down at the tentacle in her hand as she considered the idea. Maybe Silver was lying and they simply didn't want to share their secrets with her, but somehow she doubted it. Their entire race were all connected to each other after all and didn't have secrets from each other as a result. "Okay." She said eventually. "That's close enough for me. I have another question for you. What do your people do for fun besides studying other races? Do you play games at all? Seems like that might be hard to do if you all know what everyone is thinking."

"That is true, as a matter of fact. Games that involve deception or strategic thinking are not played among our own kind. Instead we play games of chance. Though we do play all manner of games with other species, though we must take measures to avoid cheating on either side because of telepathy of course. Of course this brings up the question of what games humans play. You introduced us to basketball, but that is a physical contest. If you were to show us a game depending on the caliber of one's mind, what would it be?"

The caliber of one's mind was a strange way to say smart, but it wasn't a point Joyce felt like taking issue with. "I know just the thing, hang on."

She let go of the tentacle and headed away towards a closet door in the hallway. Inside, and on the top shelf, was a square box that had been gathering dust for a couple of years now. Joyce pulled it out and headed over to the table before setting it down. Its surface was divided into squares alternating between white and green.

Joyce stepped away from the table and stepped out of her shoes. A moment later and her socks, pants, and shirt had all joined them on the floor. Her hands reached up to the middle of her shoulder blades as she unfastened her bra and let it fall onto the rest of her clothing, leaving her clad in nothing but a pair of boy-shorts. "So these are my breasts. Not much to say other than I want you to touch them. Gently." She added while sitting down at the table.

She reached over to the chessboard and pulled a drawer out from the side to reveal a jumble of plastic pieces. Joyce began grabbing white pieces and setting them down on her side of the board. As she did so, tentacles began creeping up from behind her. There were three pairs

this time instead of the two from previous occasions. Two of the pairs went for her limbs, a single tentacle ensnaring each arm and leg of hers in their warm embrace. The third wrapped themselves around around her waist before coming to hover in front of her torso. “So this is chess.” Joyce said as the last pair of appendages curled inwards to slowly trace their tips around the edge of each breast.

A half dozen thin tentacles reached for the drawer and began to pick up the black pieces and setting them up on the other side of the board. Joyce raised an eyebrow as Silver imitated her side of the board. Its placement was almost correct, save for a pair of pieces. She reached over and switched the erroneous pair in black's back row. “These pieces in front here are called pawns. The first time you move one you can move them forward two spaces. After that they can only move forward one space at a time. However they attack diagonally, so this one here can attack this spot here and that spot there.”

The tip of the tendrils moved inwards and pressed down until her flesh was just beginning to dimple beneath them. Joyce let out a quiet sigh and her finger moved to the piece on the end of her back row. “This is the rook. It can move as far as it wants, but only in straight lines.” She moved to the one next to it. “Knights are probably the weirdest piece in the game. They can hop over other pieces, but they can only move in 'L's', like this.” Joyce picked the knight up and started moving it around the board. Two squares in a given direction and one square to whatever side she chose.

Another sigh escaped her lips as the tips began to circle again, but keeping up the pressure as they did so. “Bishops can move as many spaces as they want, but diagonally. So this one is always on white squares, and the other one is always on green. This piece here is the most powerful in the game. The queen can move any number of spaces in any direction. Next to it is the weakest unit, the king. He can move in any direction, but only one square at a time.”

'Fascinating. Players are somewhat restricted in the beginning, but the number of possible moves and piece positions quickly grows to a staggeringly high number. What is the objective of the game? To eliminate all the other player's pieces? Because that leads to obvious stalemates if we are analyzing this game correctly.'

"No. The goal of the game is to capture your opponent's king. When he's in danger you say check and when he's..." Joyce's voice faltered as the tentacles brushed against both of her nipples at the same time, sending an electric jolt through her. "When he's in danger you say check and when..." Another brush interrupted her once again.

Joyce's gaze swung away from the chessboard towards a silver orb floating there in her kitchen. She might be getting worked up from the way these tentacles were touching her, but it was the other being in the room who was controlling them. She placed her hands on the table and stood up, the tentacles letting go of her in order to keep from restricting her movements. Joyce reached down to her last article of clothing and bent over as she pushed it down to her ankles and off of her feet. She stood back upright while folding her arms across her stomach, leaving every single inch of her skin fully exposed to the alien's view. "When the king is trapped, they say checkmate, and the game is over."

She reached down to grab one of the tentacles, and drew it up to her mouth so she could press her lips against it. "I want... you know... *please*."

It was a strange combination of words to hear coming out of her mouth. Even stranger to know that she meant them, but this was the way her life had gone. Joyce hadn't chosen to be humanity's

ambassador to these aliens, but the role had grown on her and now here she was. Nude and begging for a kind of sex that she could never, *ever*, have imagined a mere week ago. Maybe there were people somewhere else on Earth who had this as a fantasy of theirs, but none of those hypothetical people had the opportunity that she was about to take advantage of. This was the very definition of indecency, an act literally involving the inhuman, and something that would forever brand Joyce as a depraved whore if people learned of it, but she wasn't worried. No one but her would ever know what transpired here. Her and the race of aliens looking at her naked body.

The representative those aliens had chosen drifted closer until it was within arms reach. Part of its surface protruded outwards, elongating until it was almost touching her forehead. Joyce's eyes fluttered shut of their own accord, and she could feel an intangible force pushing against her. It was much the same as the first time this had happened, but it wasn't just words this time. Instead she could feel everything that was her beginning to stretch outwards. Her thoughts, her memories, feelings, all the things that made her the person that she was being pulled to somewhere beyond what she could see while remaining in place at the same time.

Joyce staggered backwards and nearly fell as it came to a halt. She could still feel something tugging at her, but the effect was mild enough that she could easily ignore it. It was easy enough to guess what this sensation was, her feelings were being tapped by the aliens, but that wasn't what she was thinking about.

Silver could have tapped into her mind at any time. The alien was telepathic and she wasn't. If Silver's only interest was learning about humanity then it could have simply taken everything Joyce knew from her mind whenever it felt like it. They hadn't done that though and it was now dawning on her why that was. These aliens were explorers and she hadn't the faintest idea how many species they had encountered before contacting her, but it had to be a lot. There was

precious little that she could tell them they hadn't seen before from other races. The only truly unique thing in these visits was Joyce herself. That was what they were really interested in. Individuals. *Her.*

'Are you all right? The act of joining minds together can be disorienting even if done in a limited fashion.' Silver asked.

"I'm fine." Joyce said with a smile meant to be reassuring. "Let's do this."

She brushed the tentacles to the side and stepped onto the plot, the dirt shifting beneath her feet. The cluster of tentacles bent towards her and split apart as they wrapped around her waist. Two of the inch appendages an inch in diameter reached upwards, one on each side of her spine, before reaching her shoulders. Once there they wound their way down around her arms to her wrist and into the palms of her hands. At the same time another pair equal in size were starting to wrap themselves around her hips and continuing to loop around her legs all the way down to the bottom of her ankles.

Suddenly her feet lost touch with the dirt as the tentacles lifted her up into the air much to her surprise. Despite the awkward looking arrangement, the tentacles had no difficulty moving her around and soon enough she was horizontal to the ground, her feet and hands dangling a foot above the plot.

Several more tentacles came from below, some as large as the ones on her limbs and others a fraction of that, and began to position them. For once Joyce needed to give no direction or explanation. All the places she wanted to be touched and how hard that touch should be had already flowed across the link. The tentacles already knew

exactly how to please her. It was merely a question of making it happen.

A pair of the thicker limbs wove spirals around the mounds of her breasts and squeezed while their thinner compatriots brushed their tips against her nipples. Others were caressing the flat surface of her stomach while more were kneading the insides of her thighs, rubbing her calves and even massaging the bottom of her feet.

Joyce's brown hair dangled freely towards the floor as she dropped her head back. There was no need to look at what was happening to her. Every tentacle touching her was warm enough that she could tell exactly where they were even if she closed her eyes. There wasn't any need to say anything or make any noise. Every bit of what she was feeling, the pleasure of being touched in so many places at once and the lust building inside her, would be carrying over to the ones causing it. She could even tell it was happening just by looking at the alien present.

Normally the name she had given it was accurate, but not at this moment. Silver was flying from one color to another in the blink of an eye. An unceasing parade of prismatic hues for a being overwhelmed by sensation or maybe it was the parts of Joyce's mind involved with this dreamscape not having any way to accurately portray what was happening to the visitor. Either way it wasn't deterring these tentacles from advancing matters.

The set of thin tentacles that had helped set the chess board earlier were lining up by her pelvis. Three of them gradually pressed forward towards her opening, not stopping until they were inside her. Joyce let out a quiet moan and her fingers gripped the tentacles touching her palms. It was one thing to entertain the notion of having sex with tentacles and quite another to know it was inevitable.

Actually doing it was... *incredible*. She let out another moan, even louder than before.

The ones on the outside didn't move as she was being penetrated. Once that was done they moved towards her lips. One stayed on the outside, stroking the outside of her folds while a second explored her insides. The third one, unintentionally guided by Joyce, made its way to her most sensitive spot. Her fingers trembled at the sensation of another being, not even human, touching her there for the very first time and she concentrated on a single word. More.

At the same time the tips of the three tentacles inside her began rubbing against the walls of her canal. Immediately, and without warning, Joyce's entire body convulsed, and she shuddered almost violently. "Oh fuck!" The brown haired woman loudly cried. Tentacles had just made her orgasm more intensely than Lonnie ever had and they weren't done yet.

One of the tentacles inside of her pulled out much to her disappointment at first. Then it positioned itself against another hole in the same general area. Joyce's breath caught in her throat at what the tentacle was about to do. It was something she had never attempted before, but she just took a deep breath and waited. There was no need to say anything. Silver would only be doing this if some deeper part of her had wanted it and now that this tentacle was touching her there she realized she genuinely did.

It didn't move however. At least, not right away. The two tendrils remaining inside of her wound around each other and began to grow, increasing in diameter until their combined girth felt right to her. Then the one on its own began to push in, even slower than earlier, while the twisted pair began to slide in and out. Joyce exhaled once and tried to relax as her rear was taken. The tentacle was thin

enough to fit with a bit of pressure, but even that much was still enough to hurt a little. It was a sweet pain however, and one that quickly faded as she got used to having something in that particular hole.

She gripped her fingers even tighter as the next part began. The thrusts into each of her holes started off slow but soon picked up tempo, the one on its own taking longer to increase its pace. Soon enough they were sliding back and forth at a pace that was perfectly suited to her. It also didn't take long for the tentacles to begin timing their thrusts with each other. As the tentacle in her rear was withdrawing the tentacles in her other hole were plunging in and vice versa.

Joyce's moans were soft at first, but it didn't take long for that to change and her voice grew louder as the ecstasy continued. The tentacles touching the rest of her body hadn't ceased their activity even while her attention had been centered on her pelvis. Feet, calves, thighs, breasts, her vagina, and her anus. All of it being stimulated at the same time and solely for her benefit. The only goal here was to please *her*.

Her body convulsed again as another orgasm hit her and then a third in quick succession. After that things blurred together as Joyce lost herself. Her body never seemed to tire and Joyce's hunger to be pleased somehow never lessened. The orgasms continued unabated, each as strong as the ones before it and she writhed just as much at the beginning. Eventually though it came to a halt and Joyce found herself lying on the floor. The tentacles had all vanished and the only thing left was the visitor to her dreams.

"Why did you stop?" Joyce complained as she looked up at the silver sphere.

'Our deepest apologies, but we deemed it necessary. We greatly enjoyed this, but it seems your control of the dreamscape has proved somewhat... problematic. Judging from the sensations we received as well as your responses here, we *were* satisfying you, but your desire to be pleased seized control of your mind and refused to allow your body to respond as it would in the real world.'

Peals of laughter filled the room as Joyce began to giggle. It wasn't *actually* funny, but having sex for however long that had been and being unsatisfied at the end was... unsettling. "So you're saying I was so horny that I broke the dreamscape? Well that's something I guess."

Silver pulsed brighter. 'We suppose that is one way to describe what happened. We must admit to being somewhat frightened by what happened after the fact. Our connection to you made this experience truly remarkable and we thank you, but we are not inclined to repeat it. At least not without safeguards to ensure that we cannot lose control in the same manner once again.'

It took a second for Silver's words to sink in and Joyce's eyes widened once they had. "Our connection... you lost control just like me."

'Yes. We do not blame you, but it was quite... disconcerting even if enjoyable. I suppose this brings us to the questions that you haven't asked us yet.'

Joyce knew what they were referring to right away. How many more of these visits were there? How many more questions did they have about Humanity? There was another question that she had, but it wasn't for them. It was for her. How many more times was she going

to spread her legs for those tentacles?

As she looked at the sphere Joyce already knew what the answer to all of them was.

As many as she wanted.